

GOD'S CALL

God's Call is for All

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The Lord willing, I will be going through with you a series of messages on the subject, "God's call". This subject is a very big subject and there are many things involved; there are many things to think about, to understand. We will look to the Lord together to seek to understand this so that all of us will be able to work more effectively together with God.

For today, I will be concentrating on this aspect of it: That God's call is for all. God's call is for all of us. It is for the young, it is for the old, it is for the rich, it is for the poor, for the male, for the female, for all of us in this world.

God's call is meant for all. And in God's call, He wants to help us and to teach us how we can walk in this way.

Some of us may sometimes think that in our lives, the most important thing is to have our sins forgiven. We had no hope; we are not Christians; we are under the judgment of God; we need forgiveness.

So the most important thing is to have our sins forgiven, to be born of the Spirit, to become a child of God, to become a Christian. And after we have become a Christian, we may think that the most important thing for us is to help other people so that they can also have their sins forgiven.

Well, it is true that to have our sins forgiven is a very important aspect of our lives. We need to have our sins forgiven and we should be concerned for other people that they too will have their sins forgiven. But is this really what God is seeking to do as the most important thing?

If the only thing that God is concerned about is that we have our sins forgiven, then, in the first place, God may not need to create us because if God did not create people who can sin, then there would be no sin. Why is there a need for God to create us and then to forgive us?

In reality, there is much, much more that God wants to do. There is much, much more that God has in mind for us. But, our having sinned has made it not possible for Him to work out His purposes. And so, in order for us to enter into that, we need to have our sins forgiven.

So to have our sins forgiven is only the first step towards what God is seeking to do in our lives.

So I want to begin with sharing with you that God's call is for every one of us. And this call is meant to be worked out for each one of us personally - every one of us - and also together.

We come together each week in our gathering for worship. We spend much time together in this way over the years. So it is important for us to see what is it that God wants to do in our time together, and in terms of doing His will together when we are not gathering for worship. There are many other aspects involved in our lives.

So I want to begin with thinking through with you our gathering for worship. This call involves the young as well as the old, not just the adults; it includes the children. So can children properly benefit from our time of worship? Does God want the children to be together with the adults in our worship together?

I want to address this because some children may think: "It is better for me to be in a Sunday school. In a time of worship like this, there are many things I cannot understand. It is boring; there are many things I do not know what it means, and I will learn more if I were in Sunday school. But I am sitting here because there is no Sunday school, and I have no choice." As a result, you may sit there not paying so much attention and not thinking that it would be of much use to you.

I want to share with you how God looks at it. How does God look at this matter? Does God want us to come together to worship or would He rather that we split into groups, whether it be young children or youth groups, and other groups of people, worshipping God in a way that they think can benefit them more?

Well, I would say that there are many people who have benefited from Sunday schools, from youth group meetings, and other situations. In the past, I taught a young adult class and I think they also benefited. But here, what we want to do today, is to try to understand what is it that God wants of us, what is the most meaningful and effective way for us to fulfil God's call for all of us.

We can expect that there will be many problems and difficulties, and there are many things we may need to do to improve ourselves, to correct ourselves as we go on. But first, we need to understand how does God look at it, what is He calling us towards and what does He want us to do?

First, it is important to know that for the children, if you love God, then your presence together with the older ones is very important and also very helpful for you. More than that, it is also very helpful for the older ones to have you worshipping together.

Sometimes, you may think you are not important, you are just sitting there. But that is not so. When God looks at you, God is pleased if you are sitting there with the right heart. If you love God and you want to listen to Him, there is much that God wants to tell you.

I understand that there are difficulties, and we will look to God together to see how we can improve in our time together. There may be things that we need to change, there are things you need to do, to improve in our time together, but it is important for us to see that God does want us to come together.

The older children, the young people, may also at times think it is better to have youth group meetings than to worship together with the older ones. You may at times think that there is a generation gap; the older ones do not understand you. You are living in the modern world, the contemporary world, but the older ones are out of touch with reality. They are out of touch with the modern world. So you may think that the worship service is meant mainly for the older ones and you just have to fit in. It is not mainly meant for you.

This is not true. The worship service is meant for all, and in the midst of the worship service, God wants to speak to all. Not only that, God wants all of us to have a part in it. He wants all of us to contribute to the worship service. All of us, whether young or old, can contribute something meaningful. We will look into this more subsequently, later on. But first, recognize that all of us can contribute something meaningful for the worship service.

God's message is for all, and we must listen to what He has to say together. It is true that at times, some meetings specially arranged for certain groups of people can be helpful for them, whether it be children, the youth, the married people, the unmarried people or other groups of people. Sometimes, some of these meetings can help them. However, it is important for us to see that God wants all of us to work and to strive together in the same direction, in fellowship with one another and as one body in Christ, and not as separate groups of people.

God wants us to be united as one body, working together, understanding one another and helping one another in moving together. We will look at these issues more closely as we go on in this series of messages.

Some children and young people may feel that parents and adults do not understand them, and that it will always be like that. With this thinking, they may then think that they must spend time with people their age, in order to learn and to grow well. They may think that the generation gap will always produce such a result. "We belong to different generations; we will not be able to understand one another to communicate well."

It is true, at times parents do not understand their children because they do not make enough effort to understand them because they are preoccupied with what they are doing. They are not so conscious of what the children and the younger ones are going through and they may not make enough effort to understand them. But it is also true that at times, children do not understand their parents because they do not make enough effort to understand their parents, and they do not make enough effort to help their parents understand them.

So we need to see that all of us must make the effort to improve. The responsibility is for all of us, whether young or old. We must see more clearly that difference in age does not have to lead to loss of communication. It does not mean that difference in age must mean that we cannot understand one another.

We may ask ourselves: Who is the oldest in the world, and who is the youngest? Will they be able to understand each other meaningfully?

The oldest in the world is God. He has existed from eternity and He will exist until eternity. But we all know that God can communicate meaningfully with the youngest child. Why is that so?

Well, we may say: He is God, He knows all things, He can do all things. There is more to it. It is not just that God is God, therefore He can do all things. Basically, we can see that God can communicate with us because He understands us. He knows what is in our hearts, and He makes the effort to help us to understand Him. God takes time, He makes effort to help us to understand Him and His ways.

If God does not help us, we will not be able to understand Him in many, many areas. But God has made provision to help us. But in spite of this, in spite of all that God has done, is it not true that we also, from time to time, feel that God does not understand us, and we do not understand Him? Is it not so that we think that way?

Are there not times when we would rather spend time with other people rather than with God because we think that other people understand us better? People our own age, people our own sex, people with the same kind of job that we have, situations we live in, they understand us better. Is it true?

No. We know that God understands each one of us perfectly. So too, in many ways, our parents may understand us much better than we think they do. If we make enough effort to relate with them, to listen to what they have to say, to seek to understand them, we may find that they do understand us and they can understand us.

Very often, we may think or feel that God does not understand us because in reality, we find that God may not always agree with what we want or He may not give us what we want, and we are not happy with that.

Is it not so that many children are not happy with their parents because they cannot get what they want and they say, "My parents do not understand me"?

Well, sometimes parents do not understand their children also because they do not want to give to their children what they may want, and at times, that may not be right. Whether young or old, all of us will need to understand this: We need to learn to understand one another, to communicate better.

There are many different reasons why we may feel that others do not understand us or we do not understand them. This is true not just between the young and the old, but it is also true in general among all groups of people.

Let us consider some situations of life that may take place. Let us consider a situation where we need to understand one another in what we mean and this applies to all.

A teenager was getting ready to attend a party.

Before leaving, he asked his mother, "Mum, how can I be cool?"

His mother replied, "Don't wear that silly jacket, and you will be cool."

The teenager went into his room, and he came out wearing a black sweater.

His mother said, "If you wear that, you will be very hot!"

The teenager said, "Thanks, mum!" And he went happily to the birthday party.

Well, some of you may not quite understand this.

There is a post-script:

His mother turned to her husband and said, "What a naughty boy. He asked for my advice and he purposely chose to do the opposite."

Her husband smiled, "No, you are mistaken. He listened to you. To him, being "hot" means being "popular", and he took your advice, and so he wore that black sweater."

Well, "cool" is a term that can mean "fashionable, attractive at the time, excellent, first rate or acceptable". And "hot" can mean "currently very popular, or successful".

So if we do not understand what the other person means, we may do things that the other person thinks is the opposite.

Well, the Bible also tells us that we should be cool. Perhaps you might like to look at **Proverbs 17: 27**.

Proverbs 17: 27

He who restrains his words has knowledge,
And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

Well, it is in order to be cool, and we should want to be cool - cool and calm. The Bible teaches us the importance of good self-control. A man with a cool spirit is one who has good self-control.

We can help the young people to want to have this kind of cool spirit, to develop this quality in our being. That is what God wants us to be. He wants us to develop so that there is good self-control, and self-control is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit.

Let us consider another example. An Australian man went to the airport to welcome a student from Asia.

When he met him, the Australian man said heartily, "Oh, I am so glad that you have come to die."

The student said, "No! no! I have not come to die, I have come to study!"

The Australian man said, "Yes, yes, I know. I am glad you have come to die [today] because to die [today] is a good die [day]".

Well, these are stories that I made up, but they are meant to help you understand the principle. But I will now tell you a true story.

When I first went to Australia to study, I was met by an Australian family. They joined the Host-Family Scheme because they wanted to help overseas students to adjust to their culture and to feel at home in Australia.

So I remember meeting them and going to their home, and one of the older sons introduced me to other people and he said, "this bloke". When I first heard it, I was rather uneasy and not very happy. It seemed to me he was being very rude - call me a "bloke"?

However, I kept quiet as I noticed that he seemed rather friendly and they were caring people. After some time, as I got to know them better, I realized that he was calling everybody a "bloke", and some of them were "good blokes".

Well, I subsequently found out that in some countries, the word "bloke" refers to people in a negative way. It can mean a stupid person - "a bloke". Some people think that the word "blockhead" comes from it. But in Australia, the term "bloke" at that time was used in an affectionate way. It can mean "this fellow", "this chap", "my friend", that kind of meaning.

So we see, if we do not understand one another, we may misinterpret, and this can lead to problems. So we must first understand what the person intends and what is the meaning. So it will be helpful if we try to communicate in a common language that is understood by both parties.

Children should try to speak in a way that parents can understand and parents do likewise.

For example, a young man speaks to an older man and he says, "Are you popular?" Instead of asking him, "Are you cool?", "Are you hot?", he says, "Are you popular?"

The older man says, "No, I am not, and I do not seek to be popular."

The young man says, "Why do you not seek to be popular?"

The older man says, "Popularity comes and goes. It does not have real and lasting value. What is important is to be good in character. This has eternal value."

The young man says, "But being good is so boring. I want excitement! If I am popular, it will be so exciting."

The older man says, "Being good is not at all boring. When you learn to be good by coming to God, you will find that it is the most exciting way to live. It brings meaning to everything that you do, and your heart will be at peace in God, whatever you go through. Each day will be an exciting day of learning and growing in walking with God, and you will develop a good character for eternity. The excitement from this world is self-centred, and it does not have true and lasting value."

The young man says, "I see. Then I also want to be good rather than be popular."

So there is communication, they understand each other.

Another situation where communication may not be so effective is when there are technical or complicated ways of expression that can be difficult to understand.

Let us see, for example, an architect speaking to a group of tourists. As he observed a building, he makes this remark: "The current deviation from the vertical is five degrees towards the south. Should this progress to ten degrees, the resultant instability might have disastrous consequences."

The people listening looked rather blank. They did not quite know what he was saying.

Then he explained, "Oh, this building is tilted to one side. If this tilt continues and increases, the building may collapse."

Many of them began to understand what he was saying.

So we see that many people may not understand the first description, but most would understand the second description. But there was nothing wrong with what he said in the first description; it was technical language. But that technical language is at times necessary for more exact presentation of facts.

When you want to tell the majority of people, you have to bear in mind what they understand.

But sometimes, architects need to communicate with other architects in more technical language because it brings across more important, accurate things for them to understand.

For example, we all know that the Tower of Pisa is world famous as the leaning Tower of Pisa. It does have a deviation from the vertical of about five degrees, and much work has been done over the centuries to try to stabilize this leaning Tower of Pisa; otherwise, it might collapse.

From what I understand, they started building this in the 12th century, but there were problems and they only managed to complete it in the 14th century. And from then until now, they have been observing this building over many years, and they have done much to try to prevent it from collapsing.

Few years ago, they did a very major renovation work and it was completed in 2001. As a result of these works that they have done, the Tower of Pisa is now much more stable. But for them to do all this, they had to do technical studies, and if you read and look at the diagrams, it may be very difficult for us to understand. But the engineers understood and they had to work on those things in order to correct the situation.

So we see that generally, simpler expressions and issues are helpful for speaking to the majority, but there are times when more difficult expressions and more difficult issues are not only helpful, but very important.

For example, we know that the apostle Peter was very conscious that the epistles of Paul were sometimes very difficult to understand but they were very important. So we must make effort to understand whatever God wants to tell us, sometimes in simpler ways, sometimes in more difficult ways. But wherever it is possible for us to communicate in a simpler way, without losing its meaning, we should try to do so.

One of the important things that we should bear in mind is that issues of the heart can be understood by people of all ages when it is shared in a form that is not unnecessarily complicated. There are many technical subjects that we may not understand. We may not know when a person describes to us the process of oil refining, we may not know the complicated process of car mechanics, but in terms of issues of the heart, we all can understand.

Let us consider this conversation between an old man and a child.

An old man sees a child who is his neighbour and he talks to him.

And the old man says, "Are you sometimes lonely?"

The child says, "Yes, when no one is at home and I am by myself."

The old man says, "I feel lonely too when I am by myself at home."

The child says, "Then I can visit you. You can be my friend."

The old man says, "That would be good. Please come."

So they become friends. They learn to relate with each other and understand each other. It is a common language. Both of them feel lonely. Both of them need friends and they can appreciate friendship.

We can speak of matters of the heart to all, whether young or old, and that is what God does in teaching us.

God is not primarily concerned about teaching us how to study mathematics, or how to build a big architectural structure, although He may teach us in our own personal lives. But God is primarily concerned about teaching us matters of the heart, and in matters of the heart, it is a universal language. We all can understand – whatever our age, we can understand.

Let us now then think about what God wants to tell us about His call for each one of us and for us to work together as His people.

It is helpful for us to see more deeply what are the important aspects of God's call for all of us personally and together in building His kingdom.

There are two very important aspects that we need to be very conscious about when we seek to understand God's call for us. In this series of messages, we will look at these two very important aspects in some detail.

The first area has to do with the development of each person moving together with God. God has called each one of us personally to respond to Him, to listen to Him, to work together with Him, and God wants each one of us to develop ourselves so that we can most effectively move together with Him.

God tells us that we must learn to overcome, to be overcomers, not just to be a Christian. What does this mean? God calls us to be His friend. Is it just an ordinary friendship? God calls us to be His slave. Is that something that we should shrink from and be afraid of?

There are many things that God is calling us towards. What does it mean for us personally? Are we satisfied just to know our sins forgiven, or do we really want to know what is God's call for us, how to live it out?

The second aspect of God's call has to do with His calling for us together, the oneness of the whole body of Christ moving together in the Lord. God wants us to move unitedly together as one people, young or old, big or small, in the body of Christ working together.

God wants to build a living temple with living stones. God wants to have healthy members of a living body. He wants to have healthy branches of the cultivated olive tree. God calls us to work together as one people together, to worship Him, to fulfil His purposes together.

So in both of these aspects, we need to understand the principles that apply to all people of all times. There are principles that are important for all of us, wherever we are. And we also need to understand for ourselves, what applies to us personally in our own lives and also in our context in church life, which may be different from that of others.

When it comes to application, there can be differences. But first, we need to understand the principles that are true for all. As we understand them, then we can apply them and whatever we do must remain consistent with these principles that God shows to us. We must be faithful to what God has called us.

For each one of us, we know that God wants us to know Him personally. We know that God wants us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We know that if we want to do that, we must learn to be pure in our heart. We must learn to be good. We must be willing to learn, to change, to do what is right before God.

For each one of us, God wants us to learn to relate with one another in His kingdom, in the body of Christ, and to move together in what is meaningful to God. To do that, we must learn what God has commanded, what He has shown us in the Scriptures, so that we can grow well together.

God calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. God calls us to love one another as He has loved us. He calls us to build the body of Christ together. He wants us to function well with the proper working of each individual part.

Can children learn all this in our time of worship together? Are children able to understand spiritual meaning and relate with what God wants to say to us in a pleasing way? Do children need to have meetings specially arranged for them in order that they may understand these things?

I want to answer some of these questions in our looking at this issue together. We need to look at what God has to tell us in the Scriptures about these things. Then we can walk with Him.

From what I can understand from the Scriptures, God's message is for all of us, whether young or old, and all can understand what God wants to tell us. The Scriptures show to us that children are able to understand important spiritual truths, and they are able to please God in the way they respond to God.

Although it is true that children can learn in special meetings arranged for them and there is a place for that, the Scriptures show us that very often, it is meaningful for children to be present together with the adults in learning together and following God together. In particular, in times of gathering for worship, we will see that the Scriptures point in the direction that God wants all of us to come together as a body of Christ, and all should learn together and contribute together.

Children can learn from the adults, but adults can also learn from the children and all should worship God together.

Let us turn to **Luke 1: 39-45**

Luke 1: 39-45

- 39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah,
40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.
41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb!
43 "And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?
44 "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.
45 "And blessed *is* she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

We see what Elizabeth said when Mary came to her. We are told, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she said, "the baby leaped in my womb for joy." We see that the baby, that is John the Baptist, was happy when Elizabeth heard the sound of Mary's greeting.

This tells us that even a baby can appreciate spiritual meaning and reality. In this instance, it was related to the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world through Mary. Some may immediately say, "Oh, this is a special occasion. This is special because the baby was John the Baptist, and it was God who specially helped the baby to be happy."

However, we must remember that while John the Baptist was special in some ways, he was a normal human being. God called him specially to do an important work in announcing the coming of the Lord Jesus, but John the Baptist was basically like any one of us. Leaping for joy was not just a feeling, but there was a meaning in it. It was joy and happiness that is related to what God was doing in bringing the Lord Jesus into this world.

Yes, it is true that God helped the baby. We need to also see that it is also true that God will help each child in our midst to understand spiritual meaning and reality, if we do our part and we want to listen to what He has to say.

If the children in our midst pray to God, seek God for help, they want to understand, God can speak to them and specially help them. If the adults would pray to God, and seek to understand how we can help the children to learn and to appreciate, then God will guide us, and help us to work at it together so that all can benefit.

God does want us to benefit together, whether young or old. How can we do that more effectively? That is something we want to look at more fully.

Matthew 11: 25-30

- 25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.
- 26 "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.
- 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.
- 28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
- 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.
- 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Many of us have read **Matthew 11: 28-30**, but we may not have paid enough attention to **verses 25-27**. Yes, **verses 28-30** are very important, it tells us to come to the Lord Jesus and to find rest for our souls. But it is good for us to look at **verses 25-27**. The Lord Jesus said that He praised God because God had hidden these things from *the* wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants. The Lord Jesus is here teaching us that infants, children, the unintelligent, they can understand spiritual things because God can and He does reveal to them.

And the Lord Jesus said further, "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight." God does delight in speaking to children. God does want the children to understand. The Lord Jesus went on to say:

"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."

The Lord Jesus is trying to tell us that spiritual understanding does not just come about with age, or intelligence or the wisdom of this world.

Spiritual understanding comes from God speaking to us and teaching us, no matter what our age, or how intelligent or not intelligent we are. If we are wise in our own eyes, we will not know, we will not understand. Many people think they are intelligent, they understand many things and these are the people who understand very little.

If we are humble and we come to the Lord Jesus, He will teach us, and we will be helped in our lives.

It is in this context that the Lord Jesus said:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

This applies to adults, it applies also to children. All can come to Him. He says:

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS"

Gentle and humble in heart is meant for all. We are to learn to be gentle and humble in heart. If we are willing to humble ourselves, we can learn much that God wants to teach us.

Notice the Lord Jesus was speaking of ordinary children, not special children like John the Baptist, with the special work to do, but just ordinary children. And we see that it is still true that they could understand spiritual things and they could come to God and be helped.

It is important for us to see that children can understand important spiritual truths when God speaks to them. The important thing is for us to learn how to do it in such a way that God can effectively speak to all of us. This is very important and we need to look at this together.

Matthew 18: 1-6

- 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
- 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,
- 3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- 5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;
- 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

The disciples came to the Lord Jesus and they asked, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" They probably would expect a reference to an adult or at least a principle that is meant for adults.

What the Lord Jesus did would probably have surprised them. The Lord Jesus called a child to Himself and set him before them, and the Lord Jesus said:

"Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

We know that children are taught to follow the examples of adults, learn from the adults, learn from their example. But we see that what the Lord Jesus was doing here was the opposite.

The Lord Jesus was teaching the adults to follow the example of a child. Why?

It is important for us to understand the underlying principle. He said:

"Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

The Lord Jesus was not saying that every child is humble, every child would be an example of humility. No, the Lord Jesus called a child to Himself. He selected one child, and this child was humble. There are many children who are not humble even though they hardly know anything. They like to boast of the little that they know, and they may say many things that are wrong, thinking they are right.

So, even children can be proud, not just adults. But it is also true that it is easier for a child to be humble. A child knows that he knows very little. A child knows that he can do very little. In that situation, it is much easier for them to be humble, to say, "Yes, I do not understand, please help me. I cannot do this, please teach me."

But we know that many children who are humble, when they grow up, they become very proud. As they learn things, as they begin to grow in knowledge, as they are able to do more and more, they can easily become more and more proud. They think they know better than their parents. They think they have learned so much in the modern world their parents do not know. They can teach their parents. (It is true children can teach their parents in some things, but not in all things.)

So it is easy for us to become proud. When the Lord Jesus taught the disciples, He wanted them to understand the principle of humility. A child recognizes his proper place. A child does not boast easily because he knows that he is weak and he knows little. It is easier for a child to be like that.

God wants us to be humble like children, but as adults. God wants us to continue to have the humility like that of a child even as adults. Whatever we may come to know, whatever we may be able to do, in reality, we know that there is much, much more that we do not know; there is so much more we cannot do. But more important than that is to understand that even if we can do all things, even if we know all things, it does not mean that we cannot remain humble.

The Lord Jesus knew all things, He could do all things, but He was very, very humble. God does not want us to have a boastful spirit, the wrong attitude. A humble spirit is the right attitude, the willingness to do anything, take on any position, in order to do what is right, what is good.

Notice that the Lord Jesus said:

"...whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

He said, "one of these little ones who believe in Me". This tells us that these children believed in the Lord Jesus. They had a genuine faith in Him. They were able to receive spiritual meaning and they were able to respond. They could properly believe in Him. But it is also true that as children, they can be deceived by adults. Adults can lead them astray. Their understanding may not be very deep or very great at this stage. They need to be helped, they need to be cared for, they need to be taught further.

So the Lord Jesus says:

"...whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

So we must take care of the children, help them to grow, protect them from deception by the world, by the evil one. But the children must also remain humble and be willing to learn and to be taught - there are many things you do not know, the wiles of the evil one, his schemes, are very dangerous. You may not know them and you can be deceived. Be humble to learn, and God will teach all of us.

These little children that the Lord Jesus was referring to were very often present when the Lord Jesus was speaking to the people and teaching them. When you read through the New Testament, you will notice that.

From what I can see in the Scriptures, there is no record of the Lord Jesus teaching these little children as a separate group of people. But they were able to understand what it meant to believe in Him and to follow Him. These were ordinary children, but as they were present in the crowd, in the multitudes who listened to the Lord Jesus teaching the people, they were able to understand and to respond.

Of course, adults may also help them, but what the Lord Jesus is saying to us is that these little ones can understand in the midst of His ministry. There was no necessity for Him to specially call the children aside, specially to teach them, have a special class for children. They were often present amongst the people. And the Lord Jesus spoke to the people and helped them.

The presence of these little children was meaningful and helpful for the little ones, as well as for the adults. The Lord Jesus spoke to them together, and they could be helpful to one another in learning about the kingdom of God.

We see that in many of these situations, the Lord Jesus spoke of many issues, some of which were very difficult to understand, but He also spoke of many things which could be understood, whether by adults or children.

There were many things the Lord Jesus spoke that the adults could not understand, but the children could. Likewise, there were things that He spoke that the children could not understand, but the adults could.

It depends on the state of their heart, their development, their walk with God, how they come to Him.

Matthew 19: 13-15

- 13 Then *some* children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.
- 14 But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
- 15 After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

We see here, children were brought to the Lord Jesus so that He might lay His hands on them and pray. Here the issue was not a physical one – that the Lord Jesus would just lay His hands on them in the sense that they were close to Him physically.

They wanted the Lord Jesus to lay hands on them and pray for them. It was a spiritual exercise. There was a spiritual direction. They wanted help.

Yes, we also need to pray for our children. We need to be conscious that they need God's help to understand things. The Lord Jesus said:

"Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

The Lord Jesus did not say, "Children cannot understand spiritual things." He says, "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these".

God is interested in children. God cares for children and God wants the children to learn, to benefit, to belong to Him. God wants the children to come to Him.

So yes, there were times when the Lord Jesus blessed the children in this way, but it is not a special session for children to teach them. The Lord Jesus spoke to the crowds, to the people in general.

So we see here, the Lord Jesus again was teaching that the children could come to Him and receive spiritual help. These children were likely to be among the many people who were following the Lord Jesus, seeking His help, and listening to His teaching.

If we read the beginning of **chapter 19** in **Matthew, verse 2** tells us that large crowds of multitudes followed Him. There were large numbers of people who constantly were following the Lord Jesus wherever He was and amongst the people in the crowds, there were children.

And so we see that although the Lord Jesus did not have special classes for the children, they were able to learn, to benefit from His teaching and from what He did, and to respond to Him and to be born of the Spirit, to enter the kingdom of heaven and to grow, and they can contribute in what God was seeking to do.

The Lord willing, we will look further into the Scriptures to see what is God's call for us, each one and together. We will look at this subject of the children gathering together with the adults for worship, and how they can contribute meaningfully in such a time. We will also see further how we can more effectively work together as we come in worship together, what the Scriptures teach us about these things.

One of the main things I want to communicate today is that God's call is for all of us, and God expects all of us to do our part. Each one of us has a part to fulfil in this call. We cannot just depend on other people.

As long as you love God, you have a part in it, whether young or old. We may see further how children can meaningfully participate in the worship service, not just to listen, but also to contribute. All of us can contribute in a way that will be pleasing to God.

So for today, I basically sought to bring across to you that God's call is meant for all of us, and all of us need to work at it together, not as separate groups but as one whole body in Christ, members of the same body. We can contribute to one another, learning together; we can help one another to benefit from what God wants to say to us and do through us.

In particular, the children should think through further, are there ways in which they can improve in the time of worship together so that they can benefit more and they can also contribute something meaningful?

Let us then, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us understand His will, His call, His purpose. What does He require of us? What does He want us to work at, in what way we need to improve, to change, so that we can work out His call more effectively?

Let us thank Him for what He has done for us through the Lord Jesus, to make this possible. Let us, each one of us, thank Him for what He has done for us personally and seek to respond to Him faithfully.