

# GOD'S CALL

## Major themes in the Scriptures

### The Holy Spirit (21)

#### The Holy Spirit and church life

**Reference: GDC-S18-021-Mw-R00-P2**

(Originally spoken on 21 September 2014, edited on 29 September 2014)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org> and <http://www.ajourneyinlife.com>

This message is protected by copyright © 2014 Lim Liong. Permission is given to reproduce part (where the meaning is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all, of it, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that **no changes are made** and the message is **distributed free** of charge. Please do so prayerfully and discreetly.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

The paragraphs above as well as this paragraph must be included when the message is reproduced so that others who reproduce it will be conscious of the conditions stated above.

The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the twenty-first message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures. A short summary of today’s message:

The Holy Spirit leads us to repentance and brings about the new birth when we respond positively. He then baptizes us into the body of Christ, the church, and He helps each member of the body of Christ to do his part to build up the body. Why is this so central in the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

We know that the Holy Spirit is critically involved in our lives to help us to come to know God, to respond to Him positively and to be born again, to receive spiritual life.

But we also know that the Holy Spirit brings us into the body of Christ so that we do not function just as isolated human beings, individuals, but we can healthily participate as members of the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is fully involved in all this. In order to appreciate why the Holy Spirit is so involved in these areas, it is helpful for us to ponder afresh the way that God created mankind and His intentions.

How did God create the world as recorded in the Scriptures?

We are told: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And basically in the description of God's creation, God said and it was so. God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And so too when we read further down in **Genesis 1**, we will see how the Lord says, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seeds *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. God said it and it was so. "Let the earth sprout vegetation..." and it came about.

Then we go on to **Genesis 1: 20-25**. And we see how God created the living creatures.

#### **Genesis 1: 20-25**

- 20 Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."
- 21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.
- 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."
- 23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.
- 24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.
- 25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

So this was generally the way that God created the inanimate objects as well as these living creatures and plants. But we do not see here that man was included in this manner of creation. God created man different from the rest.

**Genesis 2: 7-8**

- 7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
- 8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Notice the way He created man was very different from the way He created other living creatures.

With regard to plants and other animals, God said and it was so.

But with regard to the creation of man, we are told specifically:

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

God paid special attention to the creation of man and notice, He only created one man.

With regard to plants and animals, God said, "Let there be..." and there were so many plants and so many animals, but here God created just one man: God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

God then planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. God then gave him an assignment; there were things for him to do after he was created.

We are told that God created man in His image.

This is not mentioned with regard to other animals.

There are no animals that are described as being created in the image of God but man was created in the image of God. So we know that man has the potential to develop in a moral and spiritual direction to become like God.

But with that potential, there also comes a very heavy responsibility: God expects us to respond well. He has given us the power of moral choice to decide what we will become: whether we will become like God in His goodness or we will go our own way and degenerate and become evil.

God will hold man responsible and a very important aspect to recognize is that this responsibility rests with very single individual.

It is not a corporate responsibility, that all of us shoulder the responsibility together. No, each one of us will have to answer to God for his or her own life. We need to appreciate that. God created each one of us individually, and we are responsible for the way we choose.

The apostle Paul was very conscious of this when he wrote his epistle to the Roman Christians:

**Romans 2: 3-8**

- 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?
- 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
- 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,
- 6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:
- 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;
- 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

It is helpful for us to note that **verses 3-6** address the single individual: it is in the singular and not the plural. "...do you suppose this, O man" is a reference to each individual man. "...when you pass judgment..." the "you" is in the singular; and so too with the rest.

"...do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" It is in the singular. "But because of your stubbornness..." – again it is in the singular.

And then in **verse 6**: "who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS".

So this is to stress and make clear that every one of us will be responsible for his own personal life: how we live, how we choose, how we respond; God will hold us responsible.

Then **verses 7 and 8** make it general: it applies to every single individual and it applies to all mankind.

- 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;
- 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

So this principle will apply to all mankind: to everyone, to all.

Why is it that God wants to make it so?

It is because ultimately, the moral quality of our being, what we become in the moral and spiritual realm has to be our own moral choice and we have to be responsible for that, and God will hold us responsible.

So do bear in mind this very major aspect as we go on.

After having created man, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone".

**Genesis 2: 18-23**

- 18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."
- 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.
- 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.
- 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.
- 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.
- 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

While God requires each one of us to be responsible for our lives and our choice, God also sees that it is not so meaningful for man to live by himself.

Yes, he has to be responsible for his choices but God wants him to relate with other moral human beings. So God said, "I will make him a helper suitable for him."

The important word here is "suitable". God could find many helpers for Adam: look at the elephants, look at the bull; they could do many things that could help Adam but they were not suitable in terms of what God intended. This was not the kind of helper that God was looking for for Adam. We all know that today, men have tamed many animals and they serve men in many ways – they are helpers – but here God wanted a special helper, a helper that was really suitable for Adam.

So we are told: but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him amongst all the living creatures that God had created. Why? Why were they not suitable?

We will look at that in a short while but we are told here then that: God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

So again it was an individual attention: God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man. God created one man; He created one woman. And that woman will also have a moral responsibility for her choices: How she lived, she would have to give an account to God for her life.

So why was it that the woman was suitable as a helper to Adam but not the other living creatures? Let us turn to **Genesis 1: 26-28**.

**Genesis 1: 26-28**

- 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
- 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
- 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We are told: Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."

Some people may interpret the word "us" as referring to God and the angels – that God said to the angels: "Let Us make man in Our image".

But if we look at the text more carefully, we know that this is not consistent with the meaning. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." and then we are told: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him...

So "Our likeness", "Our image" is the same as "His own image". "Let Us make man" is the same as "God created man". So the "us" refers to God; "Let Us" – the Godhead, the unity in the Godhead. "Let Us make man in Our image": The Holy Spirit is God; the Lord Jesus is God. And so the Holy Spirit is also involved in the creation of man. The Lord Jesus, the *Logos*, created the world; God created the world through Him. So "Let Us make man in Our image" refers to God creating man in His image and this applies to the Godhead.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. So notice we are told that God created man as "him" but then we are told: male and female He created them. This tells us that male and female are basically the same in terms of the moral meaning and potential of their lives: they are both created in the image of God.

God created man and that refers to male and female. He created male and female in the image of God. So although there can be and there are differences between male and female, yet in terms of the primary aspects of God's intention and the potential in man, they are the same for male and female.

That I see is very likely the reason why all the other living creatures could not be a suitable helper for Adam. Only woman could be because the woman was created in the image of God just as Adam was created in the image of God.

What does it tell us?

It tells us that being created in the image of God is a very wonderful, very special and very important thing. And bear in mind that it is created in the context where God said "Let Us make man in Our image".



This brings across the kind of fellowship, the kind of oneness in the Godhead. While the Scripture tells us the plural in “us”, it tells us the singular in “His own image” – God in His own image.

When we ponder about this and we look at the rest of the Scriptures, it may become clearer to us that this aspect of relationship and fellowship is central in God’s intention for mankind.

God created Adam as an individual to develop his character to become like God and to have a personal relationship, fellowship, with God.

But God created Adam and Eve so that there could be a relationship between human beings, that there can be fellowship, friendship that we can nurture that would be like the kind of fellowship within the Godhead: meaningful, deep and rich.

But that is possible only when our character is developed to be like that of God. If we do not develop in that direction, it is not possible for us to have quality in fellowship.

A very major principle that we must be very conscious of is that while it is the responsibility of each individual to make his own moral choice and to account for his life, we need also to be very conscious that our lives are influenced by others.

We are constantly being influenced by other people, for good or for bad.

Likewise, we are influencing other people, for good or for bad.

But having said that, we also need to be very conscious: that when we are influenced by others for bad, it is our responsibility.

We have to shoulder that responsibility because we accepted that influence: we allowed it or we welcomed it; but we often excuse ourselves when we fail.

When we are influenced for good, it is also our responsibility, our credit that we responded well. But we must never forget to be grateful for the influence that comes to us that is positive, that has helped us in the right direction.

But God will deal with us according to how we have responded. And that is why in the **book of Ezekiel**, God makes it very clear: "The soul that sins shall die". And the father can be good, the son can be evil, the son's son can be good; each one will be responsible for his own life.

People can influence us negatively but we can still be good.  
People can influence us positively but we can still be bad.

So this is something very important for us to appreciate if we want to understand what God is concerned about in working out church life.

Look at the influence of Adam and Eve. We usually think of the influence of Eve on Adam but in the context, it works both ways. Let us look at **Genesis 3: 6**:

**Genesis 3: 6**

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Eve was tempted by the evil one and she failed. And not only did she fail; she also influenced Adam to fail. This is something very serious.

The apostle Paul tells us that Eve was deceived and sometimes when we think of it that way, it may seem that it is not so serious: After all she was deceived; she did not know what she was doing.

Is that true? No.

Eve was not deceived in the sense that she thought that eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was pleasing to God; she was not deceived into thinking that way.

She was instead deceived into thinking that God was withholding something precious from her. The evil one brought this suggestion to her: that God knows that when you eat this, your eyes will be opened to be like God, and God is withholding this from you. And Eve was deceived; she thought that eating the fruit would be good: it was good for food... it was a delight to the eyes... desirable to make *one* wise. But Eve knew very clearly God had said, "No. Do not eat of that fruit." She was clear; she knew that.

So let us be careful. When our hearts are not anchored in God and His values, we can easily be deceived by the evil one and we may think that something is good when it is not, which if we come before God in all honesty, we will recognize it is not good. But often we may not want to face it because we like it and so then, we may tell ourselves: it is good; it is something desirable.

So not only did she eat, she also gave to her husband with her and he ate.

The influence was negative and Adam fell. He listened to the voice of his wife and he sinned. So we may say Eve was the one who caused Adam to fail, resulting in the consequences for all mankind.

But if we look at it more carefully, we will realize that Adam failed before Eve had offered the fruit to him: Adam had not exercised proper leadership. At any point in time, he should have advised her; he should have helped her to recognize the right path and helped her to be steadfast in obeying God. And even after she had failed and she had eaten of the fruit, it was his responsibility to point out to her that she had failed and she should repent and ask God for forgiveness.

He did not do that. He did not exercise that leadership. He allowed her even to offer to him and to eat it. That is failure in leadership that is serious.

God created Eve to be a helper suitable for Adam but she turned out not to help him but to harm him.

And so it is too in our lives. There are many things that are good that God wants us to be involved in and to do but we may be involved in something that is not good.

Not only did Adam not tell his wife to repent and not only did he eat of the fruit that he knew very clearly he should not eat, Adam also sought to excuse himself when God confronted him. Adam said to God, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." So the way it is presented basically is: the blame is on the woman and beyond the woman, God is the One who gave this woman – "The woman whom You gave ": "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

The correct response on Adam's part would have been: "I have failed. I disobeyed You. I knew that it was wrong."

The apostle Paul tells us Adam was not deceived. He knew very clearly what the situation was but he did it and then he excused himself.

So Adam failed. And because of Adam's failure, the Scriptures tell us: by one man, sin entered the world. The Scriptures do not tell us: by one woman sinned entered the world. It is because Adam shoulders the responsibility of leadership. If Adam had not failed, the situation could possibly have been salvaged. If Adam had helped Eve to repent then the way that God dealt with Adam and Eve would have been different. We do not know exactly what God would have done but certainly, God would not be angry with Adam.

Well, there is a spiritual parallel today and I see that this is important for us to appreciate why God shows us this picture and what He intends for us.

**Ephesians 5: 25-27**

- 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
- 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
- 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

This is the way that ought to have been between Adam and Eve. Adam should have cared for his wife to help her to be pure and good and holy and blameless but he did not. The Lord Jesus Christ shows to us how we ought to live our lives. He loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

The apostle Paul used so many words to describe one thing: that Christ loved the church in order to help her to be holy and blameless. He used so many words because the meaning is so important we need to dwell on it, appreciate it.

What the Lord Jesus has done for us: what is the purpose? It is to cleanse us; it is to help us to be pure; that there should be glory in our being. And here we are told that it is the church, it is the body of believers together. It is not here a reference to just isolated individuals. The Lord Jesus Christ as the man and the church as the bride – that is the presentation to us.

So then let us see the difference between Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Romans 5: 12**

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

As we saw just now, sin entered the world through Eve and through Eve, to Adam. But as far as God is concerned in His dealing with mankind, Adam is the one responsible because God created Adam and He created Eve to support him, to help him – not to rule over him and to destroy him.

So God does require a heavier responsibility in leadership. We will have to give an account for the way we lead and how we influence others.

...through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men... Some people think that because Adam sinned, so now all mankind are judged by God and therefore there is a sentence of death on all of us - spiritual death - because Adam sinned. God said, "...in the day that you eat from this fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die" and that death applied to the spiritual as well as the physical.

As we have seen, each one of us will have to be responsible for our own moral choice.

Adam cannot exercise our moral choice for us. If Adam sinned, he sinned – not us.

It is important for us to recognize that. So too: when your parents sin, they sin – not you.

When your parents do the right thing, they have done the right thing – not you – but the influence of their lives can be very significant.

For example if parents live lives that are very negative, they indulge in all kinds of unhealthy pleasures then the children may be born with all kinds of negative effects. That is the outcome of their lives but that is in the physical realm. The children can still make good moral choices in spite of how the parents may live their lives.

So even though Adam sinned and Eve also sinned, God judged them separately. God judged Adam in his responsibility; God judged Eve in her context.

As far as the spiritual aspect is concerned, God's anger was towards them individually but as the head of the creation of man, it affected the whole creation in terms of the subsequent effects in this world. And so thorns and thistles, pain in childbirth, these are aspects that come about as a result of the failure of Adam and Eve. Physical death set in together with illnesses and various other problems that come about.

However, in the area of the moral responsibility, it remains with each one of us.

Adam and Eve sinned but Abel responded very well to God. It does not mean that he was morally perfect but basically he was regarded as a man of faith; he responded well. Cain responded badly. He was regarded as of the evil one. Both of them were born to Adam and Eve.

And so if we read the whole sentence, it says: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...

We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and because we all have sinned, therefore death is the sentence for all of us. It is not a sentence passed on us because Adam sinned. But Adam introduced it into the world, yes; he influenced us, yes. His manner of life is actually very characteristic of the way that many people live their lives today.

Let us turn to another passage to see the difference in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ:

**1 Corinthians 6: 17**

But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

Our relationship with Adam has very much to do with the physical plane and the physical effects of God's judgment on Adam and Eve have passed down through the generations. But in terms of the spirit, it is up to us how we will respond and our union with the Lord Jesus is basically primarily concentrated in the realm of the spirit.

...the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. It is not primarily physical. And that is why it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us into a new relationship, a new life: we have to be born again.



Our first birth is in a natural plane but the spiritual birth is the birth from above and we are born of the Spirit. So it has to be something in the realm of the spirit; our spirit must be changed if we are to enter the kingdom of God. And when we respond positively then our spirit becomes united with the Lord Jesus.

**Romans 5: 19**

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

This sentence as it stands by itself may seem to mean that because of Adam's disobedience, we all automatically became sinners; and by the same reasoning, through the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, the many will be made righteous.

But that is not the meaning, as we can see in the Scriptures. The basic meaning is that Adam's disobedience has a very powerful influence on us and we now dwell in a body that is a natural body: a body of sin, a body of death that can draw us very readily to sin against God. So through Adam's disobedience, we are now living in such a context that is very easy for us to be led into sin.

So how are we made sinners? We are made sinners by our own choice.

We cannot be made sinners by somebody else; it does not make sense. A sinner is one who chooses to sin. Some people say you sin because you are a sinner and when you came into this world you were already a sinner – that is why you sin; so you are a natural sinner.

But that is not the way that God deals with us. God is a perfectly just God. He will never condemn us, judge us, punish us because of the sins of somebody else.

But God can allow physical effects on us and even on the whole nation as a result of the behaviour of certain people. That is in the physical realm. In the moral realm, it is our choice.

So through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners: We all have sinned like Adam in terms of our turning away from God's ways. All of us like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way – not to Adam's way – to his own way. We have chosen that path.

And so we see the same applies in our response to the Lord Jesus Christ: even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Some people think the Lord Jesus died on the cross, so the whole world is saved; all will be made righteous.

But that is not the meaning. The meaning is: through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous if they are prepared to repent, believe in the gospel, respond to God, follow Him. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. So although God has given His Son to die on the cross for us, we can still die in our sins if we do not believe. And the meaning of belief here is not just an idea, an agreement. It is a response of the heart, it is a commitment to the path of righteousness; it is a decision to obey the Lord Jesus Christ and to follow Him.

**1 Corinthians 15: 45-47**

45 So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

"The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." He was responsible for his own life; he was A LIVING SOUL accountable to God for how he would choose and how he would live.

Adam had no power to impart life to others around him; he could only have life for himself if he responded properly to God.

The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. The last Adam here refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning likely is that He is the One who resolved the problem that Adam created. Adam sinned and so we see the effects on mankind. The Lord Jesus came so that we can follow Him instead of following Adam and his way. The Lord Jesus is a life-giving spirit. He is the One who can impart life to us; Adam could not do that. Neither could Adam impart spiritual death to us directly.

The Lord Jesus is a life-giving spirit but we may not receive life if we do not respond to Him positively.

He wants to give us life but like the people in Jerusalem, we may reject Him, we may be unwilling to come to Him and the Lord Jesus Christ may weep for us because of our unwillingness to obey Him. But if we come to Him, He gives us life.

...the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. Adam is the natural; the Lord Jesus is the spiritual.

Our relationship with the first man is earthy; our relationship with the second man is heavenly.

The first man is from the earth: earthy. He was created from dust as far as the physical body is concerned and as a result of his failure, the body that we now have is a natural body, with inclinations in the direction of the flesh.

The second man is from heaven.

We can say the first man represents the head of the race of mankind that were descended from Adam and Eve.

The second man represents a new creation in the realm of the spirit – the church: The Lord Jesus, the head of the church, the head of a new race of people; heavenly.

So if we understand and appreciate this, we must be very careful the way we build our lives: If we follow the path of the natural, we will be following Adam; if we follow the path of the spiritual, we will be following the Lord Jesus.

And here the natural has to do with going our own way, depending on our own natural abilities, not depending on God and as a result we sin against God.

The spiritual refers to our recognition that we have no life in ourselves, we need life from God; we come to Him, we depend on Him; the Holy Spirit works in us.

So now I want to come back to the original question: Why is it so important, why is it that it is so central for the Holy Spirit to help us in both of these aspects at the personal level and at the corporate level?

As I see in the Scriptures, it is because this is at the heart of God's purpose in His creation of man.

God created man individually, each person to be responsible for his own moral choice; and He wants each person to develop to the highest level of moral and spiritual quality in his being: each one developed to become a perfect man, a mature man, a complete man, as mentioned in **Ephesians 4**.

We are all to move in that direction to become what we ought to be, and that is an individual responsibility; each one of us must develop that and it is the Holy Spirit who helps us to do that. He helps us to recognize our sinfulness, He helps us to come to the Lord Jesus, He helps us to be born again, to have a new life, and He helps us to grow in our experience of the transforming power of God, and He helps us long-term to become transformed from glory to glory that we may be able to live by the freedom of the Spirit in its fullness.

But then God does not want each one of us to enjoy that kind of freedom by ourselves. God wants us to do it in the context of the body of Christ, just as God said it is not good for man to be alone.

It does not mean that every single person must get married but the meaning of relationship is very important in terms of what God wants to accomplish both in terms of its meaningfulness in experience, in expression, as well as in its helpfulness for our development.

We are all the time influenced by other people but some people may think they are not. Some people, they want to be themselves, they do not want to follow anybody, they want to learn everything by themselves and they want to be able to say, "This is me. I have become like this because I became like this by my own choice."

But there is no such person. All the choices that we make are affected by the surroundings. We think, we consider, we respond, we are influenced by the people around us. The important thing is we must be very careful how we allow ourselves to be influenced.

You can choose how you want to be influenced.

If you choose to be influenced by the things that you like then you are in grave trouble, but if you choose to be influenced by what you recognize to be good and pleasing to God then you are on the right track.

There is nothing wrong to be influenced. Make sure that the influence is good. Choose the good influences that can help you.

There are many things that we may find very difficult to learn, to discover by ourselves but God has provided others who can help us to appreciate, to recognize. And if we reject that and we say, "I want to learn directly from God in all these areas", it is very, very easy for us to become deceived, to learn the wrong things, to think that we are right.

Some people, they do not want to be influenced by others, they are very sick of this world and so they become hermits. They stay up on the mountain all by themselves so they are not influenced by all the people around.

Would these people become very wholesome? Would they then be able to pursue what is really good?

They will bring with them all the wrong concepts, attitudes and values from the time they went up there to be a hermit. Just being a hermit does not set you free from all the wrong ideas and directions of life. You may think you are not influenced by the negative but you are also not influenced by the positive - there is no one there to correct you when you fail; when you do the wrong things, there is no one there to pray for you, to care for you.

So let us be careful.

Let us do our part, develop well, make good choices, be prepared to be influenced, but be careful how you are influenced, what influences you accept; think through carefully based on what is truly good in the eyes of God, based on what God has shown to us in the Scriptures; consider very carefully so that you will develop your life in the right direction.

It is the Holy Spirit who is our Teacher. We need to be very conscious to look to Him, to seek Him and to be taught by Him.

The Lord willing, we will consider further the work of the Holy Spirit in the context of church life and seek to appreciate what that means and how we can work together with Him.

Let us recognize that the work of the Holy Spirit centres on who the Lord Jesus is, what He is seeking to accomplish, and we must learn to appreciate who the Lord Jesus is and what He is seeking to do.

So let us come before the Lord to ask Him to help us to ponder over our lives so that we learn to align our hearts more deeply with what is in the heart of God, what He wants to accomplish that we may truly love Him and walk with Him.