



**World Weekend  
OF PRAYER**  
FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

04-05 JUNE 2016

# Small but mighty



## Five-part Bible study (adults)

**God uses children to change nations.  
No one is too small or insignificant  
in his eyes!**

The Bible is filled with stories of children who have been used by God, and of children who have overcome the odds to become great men and women of God.

Today, children are born into situations of great risk: of abuse, trafficking, disease, disaster, early death – yet are being used by God to share his love and to change society.

Let's prepare our hearts for the World Weekend of Prayer 2016 by studying God's word. Be challenged, be inspired, be better prepared to accept God's radical ways of working.

Use this five-part series in small groups or individually to unearth new Biblical insight. You'll find some notes related to the questions at the back.

Let's begin with a prayer: *“Holy Spirit anoint all those who take time in this study. May they have fun, enjoy sharing and come away with new revelation by Your power.”*

### Overview of the studies

We look at God's challenge, who we are, how the Lord sees us, our response and the potential outcome.

Titles of the five studies:

1. **Wonderfully made**
2. **Greatest in the Kingdom**
3. **God looks at the heart**
4. **Here I am**
5. **The smallest a mighty nation**

# STUDY 1

## Wonderfully made

### Icebreaker

What is your earliest memory? How old were you at the time? How tall were you?

### Bible verse

Psalm 139

### God made us from a very small beginning – and can do mighty things through us

Psalm 139, written by king David, is very well known and oft quoted. It takes us on a journey that we do well to contemplate. David rejoices in God's all surrounding love and protection and that wherever we are God is already there. Then in the third part of the psalm he addresses an aspect of our existence which we often overlook.

Our body serves as a house for our soul and mind: everything that makes us an individual human being. Yet we mostly take it for granted, especially whilst we enjoy good health.

We forget that we began as a tiny fertilized egg: by the time the egg reaches the womb, it has become a mass of more than 100 cells, an embryo. David asserts that God the Creator had his handiwork manifest in this, the tiniest of our beginnings, yet also knows every day of our life from that beginning to the last breath.

Such an awesome assertion provokes David to ask for God's help in his pursuit of holiness and guidance for the tasks entrusted to him.



### Questions

1. In what kind of circumstances would we try and flee from God? Why does that fail? How is His ever presence a reassurance?
2. How can God see our unformed body? (v15,16) So how well do you think He knows us?
3. What does God call us to? (v20-24) Do we have the capability and capacity? (v14)
4. If every day of our lives is written and ordained in God's book (v16) how old do we have to be before God can start using us for His purpose?

### Additional Bible references to explore

**Ephesians 2: 8-10** – salvation by grace, all of God, works prepared for us

**Jeremiah 1:4-10** – the call of Jeremiah

**1 Peter 2: 5,6,9** – chosen and built up as living stones

### Prayer

Oh Father God, thank you that you know the smallest detail about us, every day that we will live, every word we will speak, every place we will go. Let that not be a cause for fear but a proof of encouragement that from those few cells of embryo You can release transforming power that can touch millions of people. Shape our righteousness as we live our lives.

# STUDY 2

## Greatest in the Kingdom



### Icebreaker

Have you ever won a prize for your achievements? What for? How did it make you feel? In hindsight and all honesty was yours the best effort? Did you deserve the recognition?

### Bible verse

Matthew 18:1-9

### Jesus calls little children – how we all should be

As an adult do wish sometimes you could return to being a child, even for a day? What are the characteristics of childhood that attract you? Innocence, your ability to take things at face value, uncomplicated responsibilities, short memories and new day enthusiasm, the wonder of seeing or sensing something for the first time, people who care for you, the fun of play and imagination.

In the passage we are looking at here Jesus speaks extensively about being a child, their role and their protection. The conversation arises after predicting again his death and resurrection and then responding to local rules about paying the temple tax. But mostly it is in response to the disciples looking out for themselves, seeking power, fame and recognition.

As we seek to work with children, listen to them, empower them, then we need to take to heart the Lord's challenge as to how adults should emulate children in following Christ.

### Questions

1. Why were the disciples asking Jesus who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? What were their thought processes that led to this?
2. Why does Jesus challenge us to welcome children? How is it an honour and privilege to welcome Jesus?
3. How can we elevate our respect and involvement of children?

### Additional Bible references to explore

**Mark 10:35-45** – James and John seek rank beside Jesus

**2 Chronicles 7:13-15** - humble yourselves and pray and seek God's face

**Luke 14:11** – take the lowest ranked seat at the guest table

### Prayer

Thank you Jesus that you spoke powerfully and protectively of children. Help us to come to you as children that we might be true Kingdom builders. Give us Your vision to apply the power from children more effectively for the glory of your name.

# STUDY 3

## God looks at the heart

### Icebreaker

OK, you are offered a large tray of chocolates, all different flavours, some with wrappings, some not. How do you choose which one to try? Why?

### Bible verse

1 Samuel 16: 1-13

### David is chosen – the youngest, smallest and least of his family

When your school mates choose or chose teams to play a improvised game of football were you one of the ones to be left last to be picked? Maybe they were all bigger than you. Maybe your eye-foot coordination was just not as sharp as all the rest. We all want to be liked, we all want to be part of the crowd, chosen to be at the front of the queue, chosen to be the lead.

Do you know what: God has chosen you. He has a very special task for you that nobody else can fulfil. It might not be the most glamorous role, almost certainly not the best paid, but it is a vital responsibility.

Jesus has assigned you the task, don't disappoint Him. "But I can't do this Lord," you complain. True, on your own you will surely fail. Ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon you. It might not turn out as you expect but it will not fail in God's perspective of the outcome.

David was chosen to be king because God looks at the heart.



### Questions

1. Why did God ask Samuel to anoint David even whilst Saul was still on the throne? How is this a warning to us?
2. Imagine you were one of the seven sons of Jesse who stepped forward but were not chosen? How would you feel? Could God still use you?
3. Why is physical appearance of no importance to God? (v7) Are we able to become oblivious to outward appearance amongst destitute children? Why/why not?
4. Why was David missing from the initial line up that his dad, Jesse, arranged? How old and tall was he? What children have we excluded from God's work by accident or design?

### Additional Bible references to explore

1 Corinthians 1:26-28 – God chooses the weak

1 Samuel 17 – David defeats Goliath

### Prayer

Father God, we urgently need your discerning wisdom to cast out our judgements based on looks, nationality, clothes or appearance. Rather fill us with Spiritual guidance to release young people into serving and leadership roles that we might be surprised by joy as those with a heart for Jesus transform our world.

# STUDY 4

## Here I am

### Icebreaker

Imagine you are entering a crowded, noisy room, perhaps at a party, and you are stood at the doorway: what would be the best way to attract someone's attention?

### Bible verse

1 Samuel 3

## The boy Samuel offers himself to the Lord

Samuel is a great example in the Bible of a young boy to whom God speaks in preference to an old man who has neglected his duties to maintain holiness in the administration of worship and sacrifices. It is a reminder that God can use who he chooses, whatever their age. God can work through the power of the Holy Spirit anointing a child.

Adults should be very careful not to dismiss disdainfully the contributions of children. Adults must listen and should be aware that God can speak directly to boys and girls with messages of discipline, guidance and correction. Woe betide us when we close our minds to this possibility.

We could avoid many heartaches if we were more open to God's ways, not bound by human misconceptions.



## Questions

1. Summarise the story that led to Samuel being a boy at service in the temple alongside Eli.
2. Why do you think the word of the Lord was rare? (v1) Are we in such times today? Are there places where God has withdrawn?
3. How old might Samuel have been when God called to him? Why did God have to call three times? When do we fail to hear God's call?
4. Why did God give a warning about what He was going to do (v11) and not just do it? Why did God choose Samuel and not Eli to bring warnings?

## Additional Bible references to explore

**Deuteronomy 6:6,7** – Taking care to pass God's word on to the next generation: children

**Judges 2:6-10** – Warning about the loss of following God in just one generation

**Proverbs 22:6** – benefits of teaching children

## Prayer

Forgive us Lord when we speak too much in prayer and listen too little. Help us to give space and time to children that they can hear Your instruction. Then may we seek confirmation through repetition and through the Bible as we listen, act and move out in faith. (Ecc 5:2b)

# STUDY 5

## The smallest a mighty nation

### Icebreaker

How many countries have you ever been to? So how many nations are there left for you to see? (There are 195 independent sovereign states in the world.) What has been the largest land area / population? What passport or visa do you need to get into God's Kingdom?

### Bible verse

Isaiah 60: 15-22

### God promises to build mighty nations from the smallest

In this passage God is speaking through Isaiah in exile when they must have felt like the "least" and the "smallest". He is promising them hope and peace, and reminding them that their smallness and fragility is no barrier to him doing great things and making them a 'mighty nation' again, fulfilling his promise to Abraham about his descendents being as numerous as the sand on the shore or the stars in the sky.

And so we know too that God can build 'mighty nations' from the most insignificant of beginnings and he uses children. Young people praying are the fuel of a mighty nation God is constructing from his people, the oxygen of His endless grace being poured out.

Here's the outcome: "The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory." (Is 60: 19b)



### Questions

1. Did God remain faithful to the Jewish nation even when they had been disobedient? (9: 2,3) Does He have the right to give up on us?
2. Does God's global offer (v9) apply today? What is He bringing forth? (v15)
3. Can we claim the promise of v18 for city children?
4. Is it possible for the deprived and persecuted children of this world to be raised up to a mighty nation? How has Jesus made this possible? How can we support the cause?

### Additional Bible references to explore

**Job 19: 23-27** – Job's confidence in the glorious outcome of all things through Jesus the Redeemer.

**Luke 1:50** – Every day God is building his mighty nation, extending the smallest Kingdom of a handful of believers at the resurrection: one by one.

**Acts 1:8** – he calls us to be part of His Kingdom, witnessing to the ends of the earth.

### Prayer

Thank you Lord that we are part of your plan to build a mighty nation. Inspire us anew, not to hold back but to be fully aflame for the news that Jesus saves. Help us release the energy, enthusiasm and creativity of children and young people to advance your Kingdom plan. (2 Tim 1:6).

# NOTES FOR STUDY LEADERS

## STUDY 1: WONDERFULLY MADE

**1 In what kind of circumstances would we try and flee from God? Why does that fail? How is His ever presence a reassurance?**

I am sure David who wrote the psalm was thinking of running away from God because he realised the scale of the sin he had committed: going with another woman and plotting to have her husband die in the front line of battle. Yet, there are many other reasons why people in the Bible act like this: Jonah because he didn't like God's instruction to him; Peter because he was seeking the reassurance of the familiar in returning to his original career, a fisherman; John Mark who didn't like the way Paul was leading evangelism. Sin, fear, pride, anxiety, lack of faith, confusion, insecurity: all can provoke the runaway feet. Yet since God is omnipresent this psalm assures that God will always be there. We remain always in His love and never, never out of reach: hoorah!

**2 How can God see our unformed body? (v15,16) So how well do you think He knows us?**

This is an amazing attestation: God knows all things, "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered," Luke 12:7. I can't explain exactly how God sees our unformed body but I am assured by the Scriptures that He does. And so He knows every word before we speak it (v4). Nobody knows us better!

**3 What does God call us to? (v20-24) Do we have the capability and capacity? (v14)**

David first looks at those who are enemies of God: who pursue evil actions; who ignore God; who misuse His holy name. Then he realises that he too, as we all are, is far from perfect. So God calls us to seek holiness and then to follow the path that God sets before us. Do we have the capability and capacity? No! Definitely not! How do we do it then? Only by an encounter with Jesus and a heart's desire to follow Him. On our own: impossible. With the power of the Holy Spirit: achievable beyond our imagination. Ask for Spirit in filling to get the power (Jude 20, James 1: 5,6).

**4 If every day of our lives is written and ordained in God's book (v16) how old do we have to be before God can start using us for His purpose?**

That's the whole point, isn't it: He knows our everyday, so we can know Him every day. We are all wonderfully made, we are all His creation and we all can have a relationship with our Creator. Let age not be a barrier to a knowledge of Jesus. I once told the story of Zacchaeus climbing the tree to see Jesus. This was to a group of three year olds. That summer the little boy, who I had lifted up imagining I was the tree into which Zacchaeus climbed, lost his grandfather who died. In the pub where he was taken he went round telling everybody, "My Grandad has gone to be with Jesus, just like that man said." Jeremiah complained he was too young, but God still used him mightily (Jer 1:4-10).

## STUDY 2: GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

### **1 Why were the disciples asking Jesus who the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven was? What were their thought processes that led to this?**

Pride, a desire to be recognised, a desire to lord it over others, seeking after glory before men rather than glory before God. We see elsewhere that the disciples asked for rank, a position of honour and authority (Mark 10:35-45). What were they thinking? Did they just want power, or did they feel there might be some more protection from the authorities if they had rank, i.e. born out of fear? Did they think they deserved it for being some of the first to give up a good job to follow Jesus and join his itinerant and uncomfortable ministry? The Bible is packed with calls to humility: let's remember Jesus said the first will be last and last will be first. It may look unfair in our eyes but be assured we serve a just God.

### **2 Why does Jesus challenge us to welcome children? How is it an honour and privilege to welcome Jesus?**

Jesus wants us to be simple and uncomplicated in our faith walk. When we welcome children we engage innocence, put aside prejudgement and endorse the way of unquestioning trust. Children take things at face value and we need to do the same: love because we are loved; honour and praise because Jesus first showed His care for us by dying on the cross; show warmth and welcome reflecting our invitation into God's Kingdom. Let's return the grace we have been shown especially as we deal with children.

In the time that Jesus was executing His ministry, He was welcomed enthusiastically as a guest into many houses to dine and spend time. Should he call by our home today we would be overwhelmed by the privilege and honour that would be. Excited: yes. In awe: yes. Trembling yet filled with joy: yes. Jesus says we should welcome children as if they were Jesus himself. Go on then!

### **3 How can we elevate our respect and involvement of children?**

Firstly we should take Jesus' teaching in these verses to heart and raise our thinking about children. When we welcome them we welcome Jesus. If Jesus himself was available for our work would we ignore him? Would we downplay his role? Would we curtail our perception of what he could achieve? Ascribe limitless expectation to the power of children's prayer.



## STUDY 3: GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART

### **1 Why did God ask Samuel to anoint David even whilst Saul was still on the throne? How is this a warning to us?**

Things had worked out just as God had said. He had warned the people that they should not aspire to have a king rule over them like other surrounding nations. They received many warnings through the words of the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 8:10-18). Yet God relented and gave them Saul: a man who began well but gradually wandered away from the Lord and became corrupted. Leaving the Jewish people to arguments over succession under such a failing leader would have been disastrous and potentially very divisive. Thus God intercedes through Samuel to appoint a successor even whilst Saul still reigns. Though the conflict develops between Saul and David, mostly out of Saul's jealousy, the working out of this long dispute prepares both David and the people for his rule. The warning to us is that God may well want to appoint children as ambassadors in the work as adults are subject to greater risk of distraction, complication, mixed motives and even corruption.

### **2 Imagine you were one of the seven sons of Jesse who stepped forward but were not chosen? How would you feel? Could God still use you?**

Perhaps initially the other sons were not so perturbed as they weren't sure of what it was all about and they had not yet even seen David anointed. However as the day wore on and the favour of Jesse towards his youngest and, now appointed, would have warmed, they would have become jealous. Jealously was at the heart of the animosity of the 11 brothers towards younger Joseph, Jacob's favourite. Surely we would travel

the same route of feelings: dismay, jealousy, anger, antipathy, frustration and a sense of rejection. Of course God can still use us and does: everyone God uses is a failed human; we are all sinners. Nevertheless, the parable of the prodigal son that Jesus told suggests a point of reckoning is required to turn us round. The second, and faithful son, who had not gone off to squander his inheritance, still needed a time of appeasement with his father. If we are harbouring wrong attitudes towards the involvement of children as prayer warriors, decision makers and spirit-led innovators, let us come before our heavenly father and deal with our hard hearts.

### **3 Why is physical appearance of no importance to God? (v7) Are we able to become oblivious to outward appearance amongst destitute children? Why not?**

God is just not interested in what you look like. He loves you. And yet He is very concerned about your attitudes: first and foremost your attitude towards Him. Get right with God: crucial. Get right with how you look: insignificant.

### **4 Why was David missing from the initial line up that his dad, Jesse arranged? How old and tall was he? What children have we excluded from God's work by accident or design?**

Jesse, David's father, obviously thought that David was too young to bother about. Besides, somebody had to look after the sheep. We are not sure how old David was exactly; some estimates suggest maybe 10-13 years. He was certainly not tall. Saul was a head height above the rest of the population (1 Sam 9:2) and when David tried Saul's armour on before going out against Goliath he found the armour too big and unwieldy. Beware that we don't exclude God's plan by denying children an ambitious role in the work.

## STUDY 4: HERE I AM

### **1 Summarise the story that led to Samuel being a boy at service in the temple alongside Eli.**

Elkanah has two wives, but Hannah, one of the two has no children. Her prayer, noticed by Eli, the leader at the Temple, is answered and she dedicates the resultant son, Samuel as a child to the Lord's service in the Temple. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were corrupt as they administered sacrifices at Shiloh. God chooses young Samuel to be the spiritual leader of His people.

### **2 Why do you think the word of the Lord was rare? (v1) Are we in such times today? Are there places where God has withdrawn?**

Although God had not abandoned the Jewish nation, they had quickly abandoned Him, (Judges 2:6-10) worshipping other gods. Surely if we spend our time in seeking after other gods, chasing materialism and running away from communion with our Creator, we will limit the times when we hear God's call and instruction. Yes, He is omnipotent and can intervene at any time, as He chose with Samuel, but the general backdrop will be of a populous unaware of the greater opportunities God is offering.

### **3 How old might Samuel have been when God called to him? Why did God have to call three times? When do we fail to hear God's call?**

The Bible doesn't say how old he was exactly. He was clearly a young boy from the context. Tradition puts him at 12 years old. God had to call three times because the young boy had no experience and probably no teaching about how God can speak directly when He chooses. It was natural that Samuel should not ascribe the

calling immediately to God. Besides, the enquiry of Eli enabled the older man to be aware of the attention God was giving His young recruit. It added more conviction to enquiries Eli later made of Samuel about what God had said. Obviously we need to set aside time specifically to listen to God and wait on Him. We get too busy. We live too noisily. We run too fast. And even or especially in our prayers we talk too much! I took a sabbatical one time of four months. On my first day I was unsure about setting this time aside and some were not very sympathetic. As I went into a Christian shop, a friend, who I had not seen for some time said: "I have a picture for you. It is of parents waiting at the gates of the school. The children are all in the playground playing. The dad is shouting from the gate to his son. The son continues to carry on playing: he can't hear his father calling!"

### **4 Why did God give a warning about what He was going to do (v11) and not just do it? Why did God choose Samuel and not Eli to bring warnings?**

God is patient and long suffering, not wanting any to perish (2 Pet 3:9). He is a God full of compassion always giving us another chance. Jesus confirms this in the parable of the unfruitful fig tree, (Lk 13:5-8). Eli's ability to be a messenger was very much tainted by his association with his corrupt sons: sons who God says he should have reigned in. Paul, on writing to Titus to appoint elders in the churches in Crete, says that such men must be in control of their households: a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being "wild and disobedient" (Titus 1:6b). God wants our character to be like this - reflecting his goodness, holiness and compassion.

## STUDY 5: THE SMALLEST A MIGHTY NATION

### **1 Did God remain faithful to the Jewish nation even when they had been disobedient? (9v2,3) Why? Does He have the right to give up on us?**

For a start God had made a promise to Abraham (Gen 17:6,7): He does not break His promises. His eternal plan depended on calling forth from the remnant of the Jewish nation His very only Son, Jesus, in human form. God's plans cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). Furthermore God works with failed human beings to achieve His purpose: after all we are all sinners. Working with a disobedient nation is true to His character: infinite patience, repeated forgiveness, redemption and frequent restoration. Whilst we might disobey, our chosen willingness to follow Jesus is a praise of His name and proof of our love returned. Yes, He does have the right to give up on us. At death, if by then we have not chosen to follow Christ or respond to the many touches of the Holy Spirit, we are eternally lost: until that time there is always hope.

### **2 Does God's global offer (v9) apply today? What is He bringing forth? (v15)**

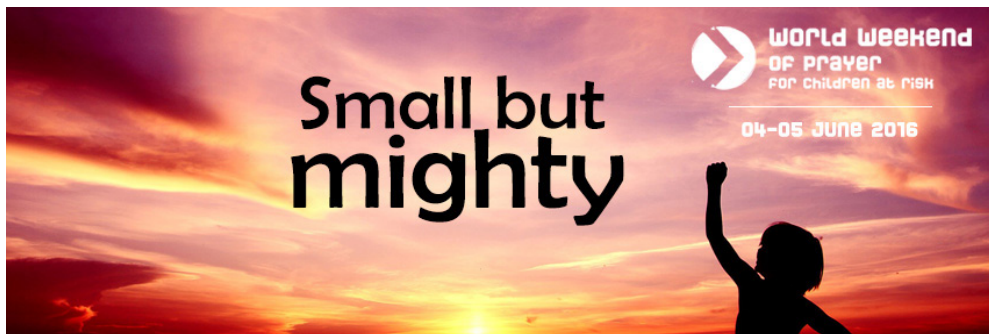
The answer is 'Yes!' God's offer goes on until Jesus' return to call all His people to Him, all those who have bent the knee to King Jesus. God is building His Kingdom: a nation over all nations: from the smallest beginnings -120 believers in the first days after the resurrection, to a mighty Kingdom of thousands upon thousands standing before His throne. The smallest to a mighty nation!

### **3 Can we claim the promise of v18 for city children?**

Yes, that is the promise. Children will be called to the eternal city: "the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev 21: 10b). Indeed we are all called who know Jesus, to that city where there will be no more tears and no more pain. Meantime, we don't just sit back. We encourage children to be instruments of change.

### **4 Is it possible for the deprived and persecuted children of this world to be raised up to a mighty nation? How has Jesus made this possible? How can we support the cause?**

The answer is, "Yes!" This Bible study has been put together to encourage you that it begins with small beginnings: children, the smallest, praying. God knows every day, every word before we speak it and our tiniest of embryonic form in the womb. Nobody is too insignificant in God's eyes. Children are the greatest in the Kingdom: they need our respect as if they were Jesus. The Lord is interested only in the heart not looks. He often chooses to use the small and humanly forgotten. Let's encourage the hands up, "Here I am." Jesus makes this all possible. He has given the call. Let's support the call, release the power of children at prayer and begin to advance more rapidly the mighty nation: the Kingdom of God shall be embraced.



[worldweekendofprayer.com](http://worldweekendofprayer.com)

## Get more

Go to [www.worldweekendofprayer.com](http://www.worldweekendofprayer.com) to download further resources including:

- Activity ideas for children, teenagers and all-age services
- 35 day prayer diary leading up to the event
- A song with score and YouTube clip
- An editable poster for you to advertise your WWP event

Join our Facebook page at [facebook.com/WWPrayer](https://facebook.com/WWPrayer) to see what others are doing.

The World Weekend of Prayer campaign is a global initiative held over the first weekend of June every year, uniting hundreds of thousands of adults and children worldwide.

Viva is an international Christian charity that is inspiring lasting change in children's lives through the power of collective action in 37 community networks worldwide.

