
The Christian Life: Part 5

Born Again

MEMORIZE

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” —Titus 3:3–7

STUDY

Read the following groups of passages. What images do the biblical writers use when describing what occurs in regeneration?

1 John 1:12–13; John 3:3; 1 John 5:1

Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 4:6–12; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Romans 6:12–13; Ephesians 2:4–5; 1 John 3:14

How do these three images contribute to our understanding of God’s role and our role in regeneration?

According to **John 3:5**, what is necessary to enter the kingdom of God?

Does this apply only to Nicodemus? Why or why not?

Read John 1:12–13 and John 3:5–8. What do we learn about humans' ability to bring about the new birth?

Read John 3:3, 19–20. According to this passage, why are unregenerate people unable to see the kingdom?

Read Romans 8:5–8. What do you learn about the will and ability of unregenerate humanity?

READ

Read chapter 6, "Born Again," in *The Christian Life* by Sinclair Ferguson.

Read these selections from the Westminster Standards:

Confession of Faith

Chapter 10: Of Effectual Calling

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

Chapter 13: Of Sanctification

1. They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Chapter 16: Of Good Works

7. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.

Chapter 18: Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and estate of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish): yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

Chapter 28: Of Baptism

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world.

5. Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

Larger Catechism

Q. 67. *What is effectual calling?*

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto) he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit; savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

Q. 165. *What is baptism?*

A. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

Q. 177. *Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?*

A. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

Shorter Catechism

Q. 31. *What is effectual calling?*

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

ENGAGE

How would you define regeneration?

Is regeneration necessary? Why or why not?

Each of us who has entered the kingdom of God has been born of God, born of the Spirit. How can this truth keep us from viewing some people’s testimonies as more wonderful and amazing than others?

“You must be born again!” Is this a command or a fact? Good news or bad news? Why?

Some churches in Elizabeth City teach that baptism brings about regeneration, or that it occurs at baptism. Based on the truth from this unit, how would you evaluate that teaching?

If regeneration is sovereignly bestowed by God, does this remove the need for people to repent and believe in Christ? Why or why not?

What characteristics would you expect to find in one who is regenerate?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Are there relationships in which you're functioning more as a "peace faker" than a peacemaker?

What is usually the first thing you think about each morning and the last thing on your mind before you go to sleep?

Are you living a life of purity in thought, word, and deed?

Is weekly participation in corporate worship a high priority to you?

Have you "chatted your faith" with anyone recently?

MISSION

Pray daily for the people on your mission grid.

Choose one of the action items you brainstormed for a previous week's mission assignment and do it. Fill in your mission grid with anything new you learn about the person you engage, along with any new prayer needs you're now aware of.

Watch "A Better Conversation" video (5 minutes), linked on the Blue Year resource page.

Practice drawing "Two Ways to Live" below. During your group meeting, have one person present Two Ways to Live to the rest of the group with a basic explanation. Then, discuss Box 3 together in more detail. Consider these questions: What are the key elements of this box? Why is this box important? What worldviews in our culture might this box challenge?

