

BIRTH TO REBIRTH

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 3:5-8,14-21

CONTEXT

Early in Jesus’s public ministry, large crowds followed Him. Yet their faith was inadequate. They were interested in Jesus—particularly in the miracles He performed—but not committed to Him. Because of their shallow faith, Jesus did not “entrust himself” to them (John 2:24). Jesus’s conversation with a man named Nicodemus in John 3 explains what true, saving faith in Jesus truly entails.

KEY CONCEPT

Salvation requires being born again by the Holy Spirit and believing in Jesus Christ.

As you examine John 3:5-8,14-21:

- Note that being born again of the Spirit is necessary for entering the kingdom of God.
- Meditate on God’s gift that believing Jesus died on the cross for our sins results in eternal life.



TIMELINE

John Baptizes Jesus
in the Jordan River
(Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus Performs His First Miracle at
the Wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11)

SESSION STUDY:
Nicodemus Visits Jesus at Night
(John 3:1-21)

Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him
(John 1:35-51)

Jesus Cleanses the Temple
(John 2:13-22)

John the Baptist Scales Back
His Ministry (John 3:22-36)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: John 3:1-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: John 3:14-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: John 3:3-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: John 3:18-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: John 3:9-13 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 18 |



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JOHN 3:5-8

WE ARE BORN AGAIN THROUGH THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Underline each mention of being born of the Spirit.

5 Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. **8** The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

REGENERATION: Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person’s life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

Jesus told Nicodemus, a Pharisee, that being born again is necessary for entering the kingdom of God (v. 3). That statement confused Nicodemus, so Jesus explained the requirement with different words: being “born of water and the Spirit” (v. 5). That phrase has drawn a range of interpretations, several of which may carry elements of truth. But the chief meaning of the phrase is grounded in the Old Testament.

The prophet Ezekiel foretold a day when God’s people would be cleansed from “all [their] impurities” by the “clean water” of God. That meant putting off old, sinful ways. God’s people also would be indwelt by God’s Spirit, who would cause them to follow the Lord (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Being born of water and the Spirit means being freed from patterns of sin and set on the path of loving God. As being “born of the flesh” yields physical life, so being “born of the Spirit” should result in spiritual fruit.

What types of spiritual fruit should be visible if a person has been born again by the Holy Spirit?

Being born again is God’s gracious work in each believer. We do not contribute to our new spiritual birth any more than we contributed to our physical birth. At the same time, humans are not entirely passive in the reception of salvation. Jesus emphasized this point by stating, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). Humans are commanded to receive new spiritual life through the Holy Spirit’s work. No one is exempt from this obligation to repent of sins and be transformed by the Spirit.

To explain the Spirit’s transformation of humans, Jesus urged Nicodemus to consider the analogy of wind. We don’t see its origin or when it stops, yet we are very much aware of its existence. Salvation is similar. Some facets of it are mysterious, yet new spiritual life for all who come to Jesus by faith is an unquestionable reality. The good news of Jesus is proclaimed, the wind of God’s Spirit stirs human hearts, and they are transformed with new spiritual life.

How can you help others who don’t understand what it means to receive new spiritual life?

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JOHN 3:14-21

WE ARE GIVEN ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST.

*Circle the results of believing in Jesus in the passage.
Then underline the results of failing to believe in Jesus.*

14 “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18** Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. **19** This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. **21** But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Because of His love, God sent His Son, Jesus, to sacrifice His life for us so that we might be born again and have eternal life.

Here Jesus alluded to an episode in Israel's wilderness wanderings in which the people grumbled against God and Moses. Consequently, God sent serpents to bite the Israelites, and many died. When the people confessed their sin and pleaded for mercy, God told Moses to raise up a bronze serpent on a pole. Any snake-bitten person who looked at the bronze serpent would live (Numbers 21:4-9). Continued life was a merciful gift from God. Looking at the bronze serpent was the means to receive that merciful gift. Likewise, believing Jesus died on the cross for our sins is not a work that earns eternal life. It is the means of receiving eternal life.

Jesus's mission to offer eternal life to sinners was the result of God's love for the world. John 3:16 emphasizes both the way God demonstrated His love and the intensity of that love. "For God loved the world in this way," He gave His Son to experience humiliation, torture, and death for the salvation of humanity.

How would you explain what it means to believe in Jesus?

Despite God's love for the entire world, humanity is divided into two groups. Some believe in Jesus and are saved from condemnation. Their sins are applied to Jesus's account and regarded by the Father as punished on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Other people are "already condemned" (John 3:18) by their sin and compound that condemnation by refusing to accept the only means of salvation offered by God—faith in His Son.

Those who hear the good news of salvation and reject Jesus ultimately are not rejecting Jesus for intellectual reasons. Rather, their deeds are evil; they simply enjoy their lifestyle apart from God. They flee from Jesus because they fear the exposure of their true character. In contrast, those who trust Jesus as Savior come to Jesus because they are grieved by their sin and know that only Jesus can help them. They are sinners saved by grace with lives that now bear godly fruit because of the Spirit's work in them.

How should our view of the condemnation facing nonbelievers affect our willingness to share the gospel with others?



GROUP EXPERIENCE



THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL REBIRTH

Read the passages. In the columns below, write out words or phrases to compare our old sinful nature and the new nature of those born by the Spirit.

	OLD NATURE	NEW NATURE
John 3:5-8		
Romans 6:5-8		
Romans 8:1-12		
Galatians 6:13-15		
Ephesians 4:22-27		

How does the fact that spiritual rebirth comes from God through the Spirit encourage you?

As faith is the human response for salvation, how would you define it, and why?



Key Concept: Salvation requires being born again by the Holy Spirit and believing in Jesus Christ.



HEAD

How would you explain what it means to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life to someone like Nicodemus?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 18. Thank God for saving you from the danger of sin (vv. 1-15). Express trust in the Lord as your “support” (v. 18) and rescuer (v. 19). Commit to praise Him regularly for your salvation (v. 49).

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

How does your life give evidence that you’ve been transformed by the Holy Spirit?



HANDS

With whom will you talk about a life-changing relationship with Jesus?

