

Nicodemus and the New Birth

Summary and Goal

In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus taught this religious leader about the mystery of regeneration, what He described as being "born again." As Christians, we have been born again by the Spirit of God through faith in God's Son. The new birth is the basis of our confidence that God is at work transforming us and all who believe in the gospel.

Main Passage

John 3:1-21

Session Outline

1. New birth begins with the Spirit and results in transformation (John 3:1-10).
2. New birth comes through faith in God's Son (John 3:11-15).
3. Jesus is the gift from the God who loves the world (John 3:16-21).

Theological Theme

Regeneration is God's supernatural transformation of believers.

Christ Connection

Nicodemus was a religious man who was interested in Jesus' teaching. Jesus told him that he needed new life, not more religious activities. Jesus' teaching on the new birth reminds us that there is no spiritual life apart from Jesus. God loved the world in this way: He gave His Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

Missional Application

God calls us to trust in His power to supernaturally transform us and those with whom we share the gospel.

Date of My Bible Study: _____

Session Plan

Nicodemus and the New Birth

? For Further Discussion

How is believing in the forgiveness of sins without also embracing the empowering work of the Holy Spirit accepting only a “half gospel”?

Point 1 Option

Read the “Essential Christian Doctrine” *Regeneration* (leader p. 107; PSG p. 84). Ask groups of 2-3 to discuss the following questions (consider writing them on a board or sheet of paper for groups to have; also available on the DVD in *The Gospel Project for Adults: Leader Pack*):

- Why are the words *regeneration* and *born again* apt for describing the beginning of the Christian life?
- How have you heard “Christian” and “born-again Christian” distinguished from one another?
- How would you challenge this perceived distinction in the church and in the culture?

After a few moments, invite groups so share some of their answers and insights.

Introduction

Share the writer’s example of the “batteries not included” disclaimer and how that can affect the way a toy functions (leader p. 106; PSG p. 83).

- ? When have you been disappointed by something not functioning as you thought it would? What was the reason for the item’s inability to function?

Contrast the “batteries not included” disclaimer with God’s grace to us in salvation through forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Then summarize this session on Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (leader p. 106; PSG p. 83).

1. New birth begins with the Spirit and results in transformation (John 3:1-10).

Read John 3:1-3. Call attention to how Jesus did not acknowledge Nicodemus’ compliments but instead pointed to the need to be born again to see God’s kingdom (leader p. 107; PSG p. 84).

- ? What are some examples of people seeing God at work in the world (signs) but not attributing the work to God or understanding what the work means?
- ? When have you seen God at work and misunderstood His plans?

Read John 3:4-10. Comment on the sincerity of Nicodemus’ question and some of his potential assumptions. Explain how Jesus clarified His statement—He connected the “new birth” with the work of the Holy Spirit, *a connection highlighted on Pack Item 4: The Work of the Spirit* (leader p. 108; PSG p. 85).

- ? What was missing in the life of Nicodemus?
- ? How does Jesus’ interaction with Nicodemus provide a model for how we engage with those who are spiritually minded but not committed to Christ?

2. New birth comes through faith in God's Son (John 3:11-15).

Read John 3:11-15. Show how Jesus identified Himself as the Son of God (leader p. 109; PSG p. 86).

- What is the connection between a person's identity and the value of their testimony?

Calling attention to this point on Pack Item 2: Hearing the Old Testament in the New, give the background for Jesus' reference to the bronze snake (Num. 21:4-9)—a foreshadow of His coming sacrifice on the cross. Only by gazing at Him in faith can we be healed from our sin (leader pp. 109-110; PSG p. 87).

- How would you explain the words "faith" and "believe" from a biblical perspective? What similar words would you use?
- How does this passage illustrate the meaning of faith?

3. Jesus is the gift from the God who loves the world (John 3:16-21).

Ask a volunteer to read John 3:16-21. Tell how the focus here is on God's self-sacrificial love in sending His only Son to die for us so we can live for Him (leader pp. 111-112; PSG p. 88).

- What is the most significant gift you have ever received? What made it meaningful?

Speak to the coming judgment for those who reject Jesus, but first comes the extending of grace in Christ. Explain Jesus' analogy of light and darkness in the lives of human beings, both Christian and non-Christian (leader pp. 112-113; PSG pp. 89-90).

- In what areas of your life does it feel uncomfortable for the light of Christ to shine?
- How does God's gift of salvation impact these areas of your life?

Conclusion

Stress that regeneration is a supernatural work of God, and yet, God has called every believer to participate in the work of getting the gospel message out to people (leader p. 113; PSG p. 90). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission"* (PSG p. 91).

Point 2 Option

Prior to the group meeting, enlist a volunteer to read the story of the bronze snake (Num. 21:4-9) and be ready to share a summary of the Old Testament story and its significance here in the New Testament. You could also point your volunteer to our previous session on this story for some insights ("The Promised Land," Session 2).

For Further Discussion

How does reading John 3:16 in its immediate context enhance the meaning of this verse for you?

Christ Connection:

Nicodemus was a religious man who was interested in Jesus' teaching. Jesus told him that he needed new life, not more religious activities. Jesus' teaching on the new birth reminds us that there is no spiritual life apart from Jesus. God loved the world in this way: He gave His Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

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Missional Application: God calls us to trust in His power to supernaturally transform us and those with whom we share the gospel.

Expanded Session Content

Nicodemus and the New Birth

Voices from the Church

“Christianity without conversion is no longer Christian, because conversion means turning to God.”¹

—David F. Wells

Voices from Church History

“The new birth is of God the heavenly Father. Through Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit, a person is changed and made new.”²

—Dirk Philips (1504-1568)

Introduction

Toy commercials are usually filled with action. They show kids having fun as they play with whatever product is being promoted. They highlight the gadget’s best features in a way that appeals to a child’s sense of imagination. But at the end, a narrator usually comes on and makes a disclaimer: “Batteries not included.”

I’m sure there have been numerous occasions when well-meaning parents or guardians purchased a toy their child wanted without realizing there were no batteries in the box. Unbearable disappointment in the eyes of a child! The kid feels duped, the parent is embarrassed, and the moment of bliss fades away because the toy can’t function.



When have you been disappointed by something not functioning as you thought it would? What was the reason for the item’s inability to function?

As Christians, we believe salvation is a gift. God our Father has shown us grace in giving us salvation. But unlike those disappointing toy commercials, this gift doesn’t need a disclaimer that says, “Batteries not included.”

The good news about God’s gift is that alongside forgiveness of sins, we receive the Holy Spirit. He is the One who empowers us to live according to God’s Word. The spiritual batteries of the Christian life are included because the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us (Rom. 8:9-13) and gives us strength to walk rightly before God and others.

Session Summary

In this session we listen in on Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus taught this religious leader about the mystery of regeneration, what He described as being “born again.” As Christians, we have been born again by the Spirit of God through faith in God’s Son. The new birth is the basis of our confidence that God is at work transforming us and all who believe in the gospel.

1. New birth begins with the Spirit and results in transformation (John 3:1-10).

In John 3, the writer of this Gospel introduces an interesting man who came to see Jesus at night. He was a Pharisee, and his name was Nicodemus.



¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus met with Jesus at night, perhaps so his meeting wouldn't be noticed by other Pharisees or perhaps because this was the best time for this kind of conversation. Whatever his motivations, Nicodemus sought out Jesus and met with Him.

As their conversation began, Nicodemus affirmed Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing. He recognized that Jesus had the blessing of God on His ministry, and so he complimented Jesus for the signs He had performed. That's as far as Nicodemus went in attributing any special role to Jesus. It's clear that he saw Jesus as a good teacher, a moral person, and perhaps even a model of how one should live.

Jesus' response was abrupt. He didn't acknowledge the compliments Nicodemus gave. He didn't respond by offering compliments of His own or treating Nicodemus as a peer. Instead, Jesus said no one would see the kingdom of God without being born again. In other words, *unless you are reborn and made new, you will not see God's rule and reign*. It's impossible to see the salvation of God apart from this experience of being born from above—one can see “signs” but not their significance.

- ? What are some examples of people seeing God at work in the world (signs) but not attributing the work to God or understanding what the work means?
- ? When have you seen God at work and misunderstood His plans?

Further Commentary

“[There are] two Greek words that are often translated ‘again’ in our Bibles. One is *palin*, which refers quite simply to the repetition of an act. The other word, the one used here, is *anōthen*, which also refers to the repetition of an act but which implies more. In the first place, *anōthen* can also be translated ‘from above.’ This is the meaning of the word in John 3:31 that says, ‘The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.’ ‘Above’ points to heaven. So when the Bible uses *anōthen* instead of *palin* in the first part of the chapter, it is suggesting that the new birth is supernatural and has its origin in God.”³

—James Montgomery Boice

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

70. 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.

Further Commentary

“The discussion of the need for spiritual rebirth develops the reference to the ‘children of God’ who are ‘born of God’ in the prologue (1:12-13)...The phrase ‘born of water and the Spirit’ probably refers to spiritual birth that cleanses from sin and brings spiritual transformation (Ezek. 36:25-27). The ‘kingdom of God,’ a major topic in the other Gospels, is mentioned by John only in verses 3,5...Jesus illustrated His pronouncement in verses 3-5 with an analogy between wind and a person born of the Spirit. ‘Wind’ and ‘Spirit’ translate the same Greek and Hebrew words (Greek *pneuma*; Hebrew *ruach*). While the wind’s origin is invisible, its effects can be observed; it is the same with those born of the Spirit.”⁵

—Andreas J. Köstenberger,
HCSB Study Bible

Voices from Church History

“Regeneration, as indeed the name shows, is a beginning of a second life. So before beginning the second, it is necessary to put an end to the first.”⁶

—Basil (circa 329-379)

Nicodemus didn’t understand what Jesus’ reply meant. So he followed up with a question.

⁴ *Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”*⁵ *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*⁶ *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*⁷ *Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*⁸ *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

⁹ *Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”*¹⁰ *Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”*

Nicodemus’ question was sincere. Because he did not understand what Jesus was teaching, he asked Him to clarify. Maybe he assumed that since he was a religious leader, he automatically had a right standing with God or already knew God’s plan for bringing His kingdom. Maybe he assumed that his religious observance gave him a better position from which to interpret and experience God’s mighty works.

Nicodemus isn’t all that different from many religious people today. It’s easy for people who have been raised in church or who have some sort of faith in God or who seek out spiritual experiences to believe that they have an inside track to God and His ways. As if spiritual interest is what gives us a right standing with God!

Jesus did indeed clarify His initial statement. He revealed to Nicodemus that “new birth” is essential for entering into and experiencing the kingdom of God. One doesn’t come into this new relationship with God simply by being spiritual but by yielding to the Holy Spirit. Jesus connected the reality of being “born again” to the necessity of being born of the Spirit. Nicodemus didn’t need inside knowledge from Jesus; he needed new birth from the Spirit.

As Lizette Beard writes:

Jesus pointed out the mysterious nature of this new birth by using the illustration of the wind. We cannot see the wind, but we do observe the impact it makes. In the same way, we do not understand all the workings of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. (Christians often disagree on the logical order of how it all takes place.) But we certainly see the effect of salvation when a person is brought from death to life, from darkness to light.⁴



What was missing in the life of Nicodemus?



How does Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus provide a model for how we engage with those who are spiritually minded but not committed to Christ?

2. New birth comes through faith in God's Son (John 3:11-15).

The conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus continued, but now Jesus took the lead and began to explain further the "new birth" and its significance. This new and everlasting life comes through faith in Jesus. Take a look:

¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Here, Jesus has forced a dichotomy into the conversation between the religious leaders of Israel and Jesus with His disciples. The religious leaders so far had rejected the testimony of Jesus. This raised an important question: How could the religious leaders compliment Jesus for His teaching on any matter if they had rejected His testimony about Himself?

Jesus didn't wait for an answer. Instead, He claimed to be the One who had descended to earth from heaven. Jesus is the Son of God who took on human flesh in order to reveal the character of God to the world.



What is the connection between a person's identity and the value of their testimony?

Next, this conversation took a surprising turn. Jesus reminded Nicodemus of a story in the Old Testament found in Numbers 21:4-9. The Israelites were grumbling about their circumstances. God had brought them out of Egypt, but they failed to obey and take the promised land, so they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. During this time, God led them, God cared for them, and God provided water and food for them. But they decided they hated the food God gave them in the wilderness. They accused God of having malevolent intentions ("Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?").



Further Commentary

"Nicodemus has found Jesus' teaching hard to understand, but Jesus turns that incredulity into a fundamentally Christological question. Nicodemus had approached Jesus with a certain amount of respect (v. 2), but he had not even begun to appreciate who Jesus really was. At bottom, Nicodemus's failure was not a failure of intellect but a failure to believe Jesus' witness: 'you people do not accept our testimony.' The failure to believe was more reprehensible than the failure to understand, since it betrayed a fundamentally inadequate appreciation of who Jesus is."⁷

—D. A. Carson



Voices from Church History

"To 'enter into the kingship of God' can only be by the gift of a new life, the life of God himself, and that gift can only be made available by the descent of God himself to pour out his life in death for the life of the world."⁸

—Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998)

Further Commentary

“Jesus then resorts to a further vivid Old Testament image to present Nicodemus with the invitation to experience this new life of the kingdom of God. Numbers 21:4-9 records the Israelites escaping physical death from a plague of serpents when they looked trustingly to a giant bronze serpent which Moses raised on a pole in the centre of their encampment. So, says Jesus, the Son of Man himself will be ‘lifted up,’ and all who look trustingly to him will experience the eternal life of the kingdom. The verb ‘lifted up’ is ambiguous—covering both exaltation and crucifixion. John makes much of this ambiguity later in the gospel.”⁹

—Bruce Milne

Voices from the Church

“The Holy Spirit acts as the agent of regeneration, and the Word of God is the instrument He uses.”¹⁰

—Kenneth Keathley

The Lord grew angry toward the Israelites and punished them by sending serpents into the camp. The plague of serpents was fierce, and the people began to repent. To save the people from the effects of their sin, God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole. Anyone who looked at the snake—who gazed upon that symbol of evil—would be healed.



Jesus compared Himself (the Son of Man) to that snake! He was pointing forward to the moment when He would take upon Himself the weight of our sin, guilt, and shame. The cross would be the symbol of just how evil is our sin as well as the source of our salvation.

In Moses’ day, there was no cure apart from God’s instruction. The people could have tried their homemade remedies to save themselves from the bites of the serpents, but none of those remedies would have had any effect. There was only one way to be healed, and it was through gazing upon the bronze snake lifted high on the pole. In a similar way, Jesus explained, He too would be lifted up. The only way for people to receive eternal life—healing from the sickness of sin and pardon from the penalty of death—would be to gaze upon Him in faith.

Earlier in the Gospel, the apostle John made it clear that God is the sole supplier of salvation. John 1:12-13 says:

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born, not of blood [biological descent] nor of the will of the flesh [which is driven by sin from birth] nor of the will of man [which is affected by sin], but of God.

Only those who hear the gospel and look to Jesus alone as their sole means of salvation and believe in His teachings, perfect life, substitutionary death, and resurrection will be born again.

-  How would you explain the words “faith” and “believe” from a biblical perspective? What similar words would you use?
-  How does this passage illustrate the meaning of faith?

3. Jesus is the gift from the God who loves the world (John 3:16-21).

We've seen how Jesus instructed Nicodemus concerning eternal life and the need for new birth. Next, we come to one of the most famous verses in the Bible, one that sums up the good news of God's love for the world. Take a moment to consider all that we have covered up to this point, and then read the verses after John 3:16 so you can see the verse in context.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The focus here is on how God loved the world, and the love described here is self-sacrificing. Romans 5:8 tells us that God demonstrated His love for us that even while we were still in sin, separated from Him, He sent His Son, Jesus, to seek and save the lost by dying for us. John 3:16 reminds us that God gave His best—Himself in the person of His Son—in the place of sinners like you and me.

The preciousness of the gift of salvation is appreciated at a greater level of understanding when we recognize the unique nature of Jesus. Here, He is referred to as the one and only, the "only begotten," which means He is unique, one-of-a-kind, and can never be replicated.

It's natural for us to value things that are unique. I remember one time when my wife and I were engaged, she created a Valentine card for me. She took time out of her busy schedule to get the materials necessary to make this card. The card contained a picture of the two of us when we first started dating. It was framed inside of a white heart cut out of construction paper, pasted onto a red piece of construction paper. When I opened up, I read a personal message handwritten to me. This Valentine's gift was unique, one-of-a-kind, and I still have it in my possession today. It's kept safe because it is significant and meaningful to me.

Further Commentary

"The statement that God loves 'the world' is surprising on two counts (3:16).

(1) Judaism rarely (or never) spoke of God's loving the world outside of Israel. God desires to reach this world through Israel, his child. It is a uniquely Christian idea to say that God's love extends beyond the limits of race and nation. (2) John tells his readers elsewhere that they are not to love the world (1 John 2:15-17) because it is a place of disbelief and hostility (cf. John 15:18-19; 16:8). Carson comments effectively, 'There is no contradiction between this prohibition and the fact that God does love it [the world]. Christians are not to love the world with the selfish love of participation; God loves the world with the selfless, costly love of redemption.' This helpful insight gives a clue to what John means by 'the world.' In John's writings 'world' (Greek *kosmos*) is not a reference to the natural world of trees, animals, and plants...For John *kosmos* (used seventy-eight times in this Gospel, twenty-four times in his letters) is the realm of *humanity* arrayed in opposition to God (1:9; 7:7). Thus Jesus enters this world in his incarnation, knowing that hostility will result and that sacrifice will be needed in order to redeem the world (1:29; 3:17; 6:51). This dimension of the Son's work must be underscored: The Son did not come to the world to save a select few (those chosen, those privileged); rather, he came to save *the world*, namely, the all-encompassing circle of men and women who inhabit this planet, people who embrace darkness habitually (3:19-21)."¹¹

—Gary M. Burge

Further Commentary

“Jesus has not come to condemn the world (3:17) but to reveal and save, to provide a way of escape for those shuttered in the darkness. His coming does not bring a ‘verdict’ (NIV), but a process by which judgment is active on those who witness his coming. Those who see this light and recognize the tragedy of their own situation have one responsibility: to believe (3:16,18). Yet it is not so simple. The affections of people in the world are corrupt; their desires are fallen; they are not eager to be redeemed. They ‘love darkness instead of light’; in fact, they ‘hate’ the light. This is strong language, which uncovers something of the seriousness of the moral struggle between God and the world. Evil and darkness do not ignore the light; they wage war against it, trying to bring it down. But despite these efforts, the darkness cannot vanquish the light (1:9). The darkness launches a battle that brings about its own defeat. By contrast, those who love the coming of the light, who look on and trust the ‘upraised,’ crucified Son, who believe in Jesus and ‘live by the truth’ (3:21), these people not only enjoy eternal life (3:16,18) but they come to the light and yearn for its truth...John is describing what happens when those in the world make a choice to believe; they are transformed into children of God (1:12; 11:52; 1 John 3:10), experiencing the power of the Spirit (3:5-6) and living the truth (3:21). Such people live righteously because God is at work in them (3:21b), not because they have a native desire to be godly.”¹²

—Gary M. Burge

The preciousness of Jesus and the beauty of the gospel go far beyond a card. The Valentine card signified the love of my wife for me, and that’s why it is special. But it’s the love—not just the card—that matters so much. The good news of God’s love for the world is not that He delivered a card that expresses His love, something we might bring out and admire every now and then. It’s that His love is the foundation of His Son’s sacrifice—and this is the love that undergirds our Christian life.



What is the most significant gift you have ever received? What made it meaningful?

In John 3:17, we see that God sent His Son into the world not to judge it but rather to save it. Scripture is clear that there will come a day when Jesus will judge the non-believing world, and all who reject God’s free gift of salvation through Christ will receive the consequences. But before judgment comes the extending of grace. Before judgment comes the appeal of God’s Son to all humanity.

John wrote that those who reject Jesus already stand condemned before God. It’s similar to a criminal who has been arrested for murder, who pled not guilty, who went to trial and was found guilty, who received his sentence of the death penalty, and who is now on death row awaiting his execution. The time from the convicting and sentencing until the time that the execution takes place is similar to the state of non-believing humanity. We’ve been condemned by our sin; all we wait for now is for the death sentence to be carried out.

The good news is that Christ came to be executed in our place. When we trust in Jesus, we are accepting God’s plea bargain, which expresses the truth that Jesus has already taken the execution sentence in our place. By grace through faith, we can be set free from the prison of sin and be given a new life in Christ because the sentence has been carried out.



Unfortunately, as this passage shows us, humans naturally love darkness (the sinful deeds and lifestyle we’re born into) rather than the light of Jesus Christ. We live in a society where people entertain the false understanding that one can have Jesus *plus* their sin, to have Jesus as their light even while they pursue the deeds of darkness.

But this passage shows us the reality of what life looks like for those who have embraced Jesus: “But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” (John 3:21). Those who come to Jesus want His light to expose all of their life so that He can continue His work of renovating us from the inside out.

There's something about having a clean house that motivates us to entertain company. When I was growing up, my mom would not allow people to come into our house if it was not clean. If there were times when family would drop by for a surprise visit, my mom would only allow them into certain rooms that were clean, which were most often the front room and the bathroom. People were not allowed to go into other rooms!

Often we treat Jesus this way. Imagine your heart as a spiritual home, and when you embrace God's gift of salvation through Jesus, He becomes the owner of the house, as God the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of you. As the homeowner, He has the right to go through every room and make the renovations that He desires because He owns the home. Christ paid for it with His blood.

Sometimes I wonder if we feel more comfortable being a tour guide for Jesus walking through our home—as if we can keep certain rooms off-limits to Him. This passage of Scripture reminds us that Jesus is the light. He shines into every nook and cranny of our heart and brings about His transforming power.

-  In what areas of your life does it feel uncomfortable for the light of Christ to shine?
-  How does God's gift of salvation impact these areas of your life?

Conclusion

The work of regeneration is a supernatural work of God, not the natural work of man. Nevertheless, the responsibility of getting the message of the gospel out is the work God has called every believer to participate in. We should never assume that because people are familiar with religion, Christianity, or even the church that they know Jesus as their Savior. God has called every believer to trust in His power as we are transformed by the Holy Spirit.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Nicodemus was a religious man who was interested in Jesus' teaching. Jesus told him that he needed new life, not more religious activities. Jesus' teaching on the new birth reminds us that there is no spiritual life apart from Jesus. God loved the world in this way: He gave His Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

Voices from the Church

"Christianity is not something you *add* to your life; it *is* life!"¹³

—Henry Blackaby

Voices from Church History

"Oh, what a gift of grace this is that is freely given to us by God! 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son' (John 3:16). He is God's unspeakable gift."¹⁴

—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)