



TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

August 30, 2026

Knowing the Holy Spirit Part 5: Regeneration

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation – What does it say?

1. Pastor Doug noted that in regeneration the Holy Spirit accomplishes four things. What are they?
2. What five images does the Bible use to describe regeneration?
3. Pastor Doug noted that a major debate among Christians is the chronological order between faith and regeneration, specifically: “Does regeneration precede and enable faith, or does regeneration follow faith as God’s gift to the one who believes?” Have you ever encountered this question before?

Interpretation – What does it mean?

4. Why must regeneration be more than mere moral improvement or self-improvement?
5. What is the significance of the Bible's repeated use of images such as “new heart,” “new creation,” “resurrection,” and “new birth”?
6. According to John 1:12–13, who does, and does not, cause new birth to occur?

Application – What do I do with this?

7. How confident are you that, if you were to die tonight, you would go to heaven?

Unsure Confident

8. If you were to die tonight and God asked you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?”, what would you say?
9. How does the fact that only God can accomplish regeneration impact the way we think about and talk about salvation?
10. What is the evidence that a person has received a “new heart” and been made a “new creation”?
11. What is one concrete way you could “walk in” the new life God has given you this week?



Sermon Summary

Today I want to discuss the Holy Spirit's role in imparting spiritual life. This ministry is critical because the Bible teaches that, apart from Christ, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. At conversion, the Holy Spirit reverses that. Theologians call this life-imparting work of the Holy Spirit "regeneration" (Matt. 19:28; Titus 3:5). Regeneration is not self-improvement, moral reform, or merely a change in status before God; it is the Holy Spirit's gracious work of giving spiritual life to those who come to Christ in faith.

Regeneration: The act by which God, through the Holy Spirit, imparts eternal spiritual life to the person who believes in Christ as Savior. The Spirit imparts divine life to the soul, gives a new nature or new heart, makes us a new creation, and moves us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

This new spiritual life affects the believer's intellect (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 1:18; Col. 3:10), will (Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:5; Heb. 13:21), and emotions (Matt. 5:4; 1 Pet. 1:8). The point is that eternal life does not originate in us; it comes from God and is given by His Spirit. Regeneration is God giving spiritual life where there was spiritual death (Ezekiel 36:26–27; Rom. 6:1–14; 2:29; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10).

Jesus gives us one of the clearest images of regeneration in John chapter 3:1–5, where He describes it as a new birth. Here Jesus is talking about what is required to enter the Kingdom of God. The meaning of being "born of the Spirit" seems clear—He is talking about a spiritual rebirth sourced in the Holy Spirit. But there are many different interpretations of "born of water" (Acts 11:16; Eph. 5:26; 1 Peter 1:23; John 3:6–7). This spiritual rebirth is clearly something that God brings about. In that work, we contribute nothing (John 1:10–13). To whom does God regenerate? To whom does God give eternal life? Jesus tells us in John chapter 3:14–18. All of these images—new life, new birth, new creation, resurrection, and a new heart—show that regeneration is a new beginning only God can bring about.

My conviction is that Scripture consistently presents regeneration as God's gift to those who respond to Christ in faith, while also preserving that faith itself is possible only because of the Spirit's gracious drawing and enabling work. Does regeneration precede and enable faith - or does regeneration follow faith as God's gift to the one who believes? Does Scripture teach that regeneration enables faith, or that God grants regeneration to those who believe? The dispute concerns the logical order: does new life enable faith, or does God grant new life to those who believe? In Ezekiel 18:30–32, new life seems to flow from repentance, not the other way around. In Acts 11:18, the means by which God grants repentance is the hearing of the gospel and the response to the drawing ministry of the Holy Spirit. What is clear is that hearing with faith precedes the reception of the Holy Spirit. Across all these passages - John 5:40; John 6:51; John 20:31; Acts 15:9; John 1:12; Gal. 3:26; John 12:36; Eph. 1:13; Gal. 3:2,5 - the pattern is consistent: Scripture calls people to repent, come, believe, and receive Christ, and it presents life, cleansing, sonship, and the Spirit's saving benefits as gifts God grants in connection with that faith.

So, the answer to our main question is this: regeneration is not the result of human resolve, religious effort, or moral improvement; it is the Holy Spirit's gracious work of giving spiritual life to those who come to Christ in faith. We do not produce that life in ourselves; we receive it as God's gift. If you have never come to Christ, do not try to make yourself alive. Come to Him. Believe in Him. Receive the life that only the Spirit can give. If you have come to Christ in faith, then marvel at what the Spirit has done: He has given you a new heart, made you a new creation, and granted you eternal life—the very life of God Himself. All of these are gifts of the Holy Spirit who causes us to be born again to a living hope. The Spirit has given life where there was death.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Monday — The new birth is absolutely necessary because our natural condition is spiritually dead.

Jesus does not present the new birth as an advanced level of Christianity. He says: “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The problem is deeper than ignorance or bad habits. By nature, fallen man is spiritually dead, hostile to God, and unable to submit himself to God. Consequently, the sinner does not merely need better instruction or stronger resolutions. He needs a new life.

Study: John 3:3–7; Ephesians 2:1–3; Romans 8:7–8; 1 Corinthians 2:14

Application/Challenge: Have I merely reformed my behavior, adopted Christian beliefs, or joined a church—or has God actually given me spiritual life?

Tuesday — The new birth is a work of God, not something man produces.

John says that those who become God's children are born: “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Jesus compares the Spirit's work to the wind: “The wind blows where it wishes” (John 3:8).

Regeneration is not ultimately the result of human decision, intellectual persuasion, or moral effort. We need a new heart.

Study: John 1:12–13; John 3:5–8; Ezekiel 36:25–27; Titus 3:4–7; James 1:18

Application/Challenge: Am I trusting in something I have done—a decision, prayer, profession, baptism—or am I looking to the grace of God as the source of my salvation?

Wednesday — The new birth changes the inner person: God gives a new heart and new spiritual affections.

The biblical language is remarkably strong: “I will give you a new heart. I will put my Spirit within you.” The new birth is therefore not simply the addition of new information to the mind. The governing disposition of the person is changed. The person who formerly found God burdensome begins to desire God. The person who formerly loved sin begins to hate it. The person who had no appetite for God's Word begins to hunger for it.

Study: Ezekiel 36:26–27; Jeremiah 31:31–34; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4–6

Application/Challenge: What do I actually love? What do I hate? What do I desire when no one is watching?

Thursday — Repentance and faith become the beginning of a lifelong warfare against sin.

We must not confuse momentary religious experience with genuine conversion. Conversion produces a life of repentance. The Christian increasingly recognizes the seriousness of sin and seeks to put it to death: “If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). The newly born Christian does not merely say, “I believe in Jesus.” His life begins to move in a new direction. The evidence of life is not that the Christian never struggles with sin, but that he is engaged in the struggle.

Study: Mark 1:15; Acts 2:37–38; Acts 16:31; Colossians 3:5–10; Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:24

Application/Challenge: What evidence of spiritual warfare is there in my life? Am I killing sin, or have I simply learned to live comfortably with it?

Friday — The new birth produces practical holiness and obedience.

The New Testament repeatedly connects the new birth with a changed life. John is particularly blunt: “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning” (1 John 3:6). A life of rebellion against God is incompatible with regeneration. The regenerated person begins to obey God, love fellow Christians, resist sin, practice righteousness, and desire holiness. There are “marks” or “signs” of grace. Christians are to examine whether the reality of regeneration can be seen in our lives.

Study: 1 John 2:3–6; 1 John 3:7–10; Matthew 7:16–20; Titus 2:11–14; James 2:17–18

Application/Challenge: Is there a recognizable difference between my life now and the life I lived before I professed Christ?

Saturday — The new birth can and should be the subject of serious self-examination.

Paul says: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Peter says: “Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election” (2 Peter 1:10). And John writes his first epistle specifically so that believers might know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Biblical self-examination avoids two errors: Presumption: “I prayed a prayer once, therefore I know I'm saved, regardless of how I live” and Despair: “I still struggle with sin, therefore I must not be saved.” Instead, the believer examines himself for evidence of grace: continuing faith in Christ, repentance from sin, love for God, love for God's people, hunger for God's Word, obedience, perseverance, hatred of sin, and growth in holiness.

Study: 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 5:13; 2 Peter 1:5–8; Romans 8:14–16

Application/Challenge: Am I both resting upon Christ and God's promises and also observing evidence of the Spirit's work within me?