

John 3:1–15 Sermon-Based Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To see our need for regeneration and be encouraged to trust in Christ for new life.

Sermon Refresher: Our credentials can't give us standing with God. We're all dead because of sins. We need a new birth that cleanses us from sin and gives us new life (what's called the doctrine of regeneration). The challenge, though, is that we can't make ourselves alive. When we trust in Christ, however, it's because God has made us alive through the gospel. The new birth should call us to belief, humble us, and reassure us that God will complete what he has begun.

Discussion

1. How do you tend to establish your credentials? What do you take pride in to give you credibility? The sermon mentioned education, work, family etc., but there are lots of other possibilities. It could be any area which you probably think of as a strength that you feel gives you legitimacy.
2. What's your reaction to the term "born-again"? How do you handle the sometimes valid complaint that Christians are hypocritical and self-righteous?
3. Read Ephesians 2:1–3. Discuss what are the traits which Paul describes as true of human beings apart from God.

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

- How well do you think these traits describe what it's like to live without a relationship with God? Does it feel overboard?

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- How do you see some of those characteristics in the way you used to be, before you were a Christian? How do you see these characteristics still?
4. The sermon described how the new birth may be dramatic for some people, and for others, it's imperceptible when exactly it happened. Which do you feel like more fits your story? How can both kinds of stories help us understand how God works in our lives?
 5. In what ways are you tempted to see some people as beyond God's reach, as unsaveable, or at least really unlikely candidates? How does the doctrine of regeneration change that?
 6. When God makes us alive, our new life begins to grow; we start to change. Not all at once, never perfectly, always in process. But the Bible reassures (and challenges) us that change does happen. The apostle John gives us some characteristics in 1 John of what the born again life looks like. Read and discuss.
 - 1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.
 - 1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
 - 1 John 2:29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.
 - 1 John 3:9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.
 - 1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them.
 - What do these verses tell us about the new life God gives? Remembering that no one is perfect or has arrived, how do these verses help you reflect on your own Christian faith?

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7. How should this truth of regeneration shape how we see God and relate to him? What kind of impact should it have on how we interact with others? Or on our own character and attitude?