

WHAT IS REGENERATION?

by Matthew Barrett

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote^[MB1].

1. Man, before the Fall, had the “free will” to stay with God or rebel against Him. What ability does a person have now as a result of the Fall? (5-6)
By using this question you can find out a lot about your group. The answer to this question establishes the differences in systems of theology (Calvinism and Arminianism). Don't spend a lot of time here, or allow things to get into an argument. You will need the time later to let the Scripture settle any differences.
2. When the Gospel is shared with a person, can the Gospel message be rejected? (6-8)
The overwhelming evidence proves that it can be rejected, and most times it is. Jesus gives us the breakdown in the Parable of the Sower, telling us we can expect four types of responses, with only one of them resulting in true salvation, proving it by the production of fruit.
3. Read Mark 2:1-12 and 3:1-6. Describe the different reactions to what Jesus did and taught. After seeing these miracles with their own eyes, why did some still reject Jesus? (8-14)
*This is the heart of understanding the doctrines of God and man. Take the group through Rom.8:28-30 and John 6:44 and 65. Help the group to start thinking about God's role in salvation first. Foreknowledge means God has **always** known who the elect were. He never looked ahead to see who would accept His call (for that would put salvation totally on us), nor did the Trinity ever sit down to decide who would be the elect. God has always known! This must be our starting point – not man's ability or disability!*
4. Read John 6:22-65, noting especially verses 37, 44, and 65. If you were standing there listening to Jesus, what would you have thought He was saying? (12-13)
Jesus was making it very clear to His listeners that coming to faith in Him was only given by His granting salvation to a person. Jesus is expanding on what John 1:13 began. John 3:6-8 adds this is the work of the Holy Spirit alone.
5. What was the result of Jesus teaching upon many of His disciples in John 6:66-69?
This was more than they could handle. There are many Christians who want to have something do for their salvation and Jesus makes it clear we can do nothing. The true Christian response is to fall on our knees to thank Him for doing for us what we are incapable of doing ourselves.
- 4-6. Read Ezekiel 11:19-21. Does God do what He says here based on what the people did? Or, did He do in them what they were incapable of doing themselves? (14-18)
This brings us back to the main issue – is salvation based in what man decides to do, or is it based, from beginning to end on God doing what man is incapable of doing? Keep before the group that God only does this out of His gracious love for His chosen ones – us.

5-7. Read John 3:1-8, and John 1:12-13, noting especially how vs.13 explains how vs.12 can happen. From what Jesus says to Nicodemus, contrasting natural birth with spiritual birth, what role does Jesus give to the Spirit and what role does He give to Nicodemus? (18-25)

When a baby is born it has no say in what part it plays. Likewise, Jesus is telling Nicodemus that unless God's Spirit does His work in him, he will never enter the Kingdom of God. Remember, Nicodemus was a religious leader who had been convinced he was already accepted by God. Jesus corrected his wrong thinking that he, by his "good works," had any part in being born again.

6-8. Now read James 1:16-18. What do these verses teach us about salvation? (25)

Continue to bring out these verses, and keep showing the group that God's love and mercy is the driving force behind what He does. He is not being a bully; He is displaying His love to those who would never have the ability to embrace it on their own.

7-9. What does 1 Peter 1:3-5 say about our part in salvation? How long does it say it will last? (25-27)

We are the joyful recipients of God's mercy in salvation. Since God has been the One Who originated the whole act of salvation, Peter adds that in the end our salvation will still be there.

8-10. There are three words that keep appearing. How would you define each of the following? (27-31)

Justice – getting **all** you deserve – This is what all deserve as a result of the Fall.

Mercy – not getting **all** you deserve – When we come to faith, **all** of our sins are forgiven (past, present, and future), but the consequences of sin don't just disappear. When adultery is committed and a child is born, the parents can be forgiven, but the consequence of their sin doesn't disappear.

Grace – getting what you don't deserve – This is the most amazing part of salvation. God would have been totally justified to destroy us for our sin, but He chose to lavish His love on us anyway.

9-11. In light of all these verses, God is the One who changes a person's heart. Therefore, why do we need to do any evangelism? (31-36)

This entire study was about what God does in saving us. This is what the Scripture teaches. It is about Him from start to finish. For this we should be extremely grateful. However, Scripture also gives us clear commands to share the gospel with those outside Christ. This is what we need to understand here: God does what He must from His level, and we must do what He tells us on our level. On our level we are told to share the gospel with everyone, and from there we leave the results to God. This is refreshing because it means we are not responsible if someone fails to heed God's call. Evangelism is sharing Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God. This we can do!

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

Throughout this study there has been the emphasis that our salvation rests in God and Him alone. We are told there is nothing we can do. But there is one thing. We can stop right now and thank Him for doing what we could never do for ourselves.

For Further Study

Salvation by Grace: The Case for Effectual Calling and Regeneration, Matthew Barrett. P&R, 2013.

Saved by Grace: The Glory of Salvation in Ephesians 2, Richard D. Phillips. P&R, 2009.

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