

## EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK OF JOHN

### Group Bible Study 1

#### THE NEED OF THE MORAL PEOPLE— LIFE'S REGENERATING

#### VERSES TO READ:

#### John 3

1 But there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the JEWS.

2 This one came to Him by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.

3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?

5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into 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 anew.

8 The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said to him, You are a teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the

wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15 That every one who believes into Him may have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

17 For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

18 He who believes into Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God.

#### DISCOVERY PORTION:

#### Nicodemus Needing Regeneration

Nicodemus was a person of the highest class, and we need to consider his virtues and attributes. Firstly, he was a teacher with the highest attainment in education. As a teacher of the Jews, he taught the Old Testament, the Sacred Word. Secondly, Nicodemus was “a ruler of the Jews.” He had a position with a certain amount of honor and authority. Thirdly, he was an old man. As an old man, he had a good deal of experience. He was a man full of experiences. Fourthly, he was undoubtedly a moral man, a good man. If you look at the way he talked, you will realize that he was a moral man. Fifthly, Nicodemus was a man who was truly seeking

after God. Although he was somewhat fearful of the Pharisees, he still came to the Lord Jesus by night. This indicated that he was seeking God. Sixthly, he was very humble. Nicodemus was an old man of perhaps sixty or seventy years of age, yet he came to see the Lord Jesus, who was only a little over thirty years of age. That such an experienced, educated, and elderly man would come to see someone much younger than he indicates his humility. Furthermore, although Nicodemus was a teacher, he addressed the Lord Jesus as Rabbi. Among the Jews, to call a person Rabbi means that you are humbling yourself. Seventhly, Nicodemus was an honest man. His speech reveals his honesty. Can you find a better person than Nicodemus? He was a man of a superior standard, high attainment, and morality.

When Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus, the Lord took the opportunity to reveal the true need of mankind. In His conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord revealed that regardless of how good we are, we still need regeneration. **Regeneration is the first need of man.** Moral people, as well as immoral people, need regeneration. Many Christians hold the mistaken concept that people need regeneration simply because they are fallen. However, if man had never fallen, he still would have needed regeneration. Even if Adam had not fallen, he still would have needed regeneration. That was why God put him in front of the tree of life. If Adam had partaken of the tree of life, he would have been regenerated.

Since we are human beings, we all have a human life. The problem is not a matter of whether or not our human life is good or bad. **Regardless of the kind of human life we have, as long as we do not have the divine life, we need to be regenerated.** To be regenerated simply means to have the divine life besides our human life. God's eternal purpose is that man be a vessel to contain the divine life. Our being with our human life is a vessel to contain God as life. The divine life is God's goal. The divine life is God Himself. God's goal is that we, as people with a human life, receive the divine life into our being as our real life. This is the true meaning of regeneration. Many Christians are not clear about this fact, thinking that regeneration is necessary simply because we are fallen and sinful. According to this concept, we need to be regenerated because our life is bad and cannot be improved. This concept is wrong.

What is the meaning of regeneration? Regeneration is not any kind of outward improvement or cultivation; neither is it only a mere change or conversion without life. Regeneration is a rebirth which brings in a new life. It is absolutely a matter of life, not a matter of doing. Regeneration is simply to have life other than the life we already have. We have already received the human life from our parents; now we need to receive the divine life from God. Hence, regeneration means to have the divine life of God in addition to the human life which we already possess. Therefore, regeneration requires another birth in order to possess another life. To be regenerated, to be

born again, does not mean to adjust or correct ourselves. It means to have the life of God, just as to be born of our parents means to have the life of our parents. **To be regenerated is to be born of God (John 1:13), and to be born of God is to have the life of God, that is, the eternal life (3:15-16).** If we have the life of God, we are the sons of God. The life of God gives us the right to become the sons of God (John 1:12), because by this life we have the divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4) and have the life-relationship with God, that is, the sonship (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-6; "adoption" in Greek is "sonship").

### **Man's and Religion's False Concept—the Need of Better Teaching to Improve Man**

Due to human culture and Jewish religion, Nicodemus thought that man needed to behave. Since man must have good conduct and worship God in a proper way, man needs much teaching. Nicodemus considered Christ to be a teacher come from God. This indicates that he might have thought that he needed better teachings to improve himself. But the Lord's answer in the following verse unveiled to him that his need was to be born anew. To be born anew is to be regenerated with the divine life, a life other than the human life received by natural birth. Hence, his real need was not better teachings, but the divine life. **All of us must realize that what we need is not religion or teaching to regulate and correct us, but another life, the life of God, to regenerate us.** Man

needs regeneration because he needs the divine life. The Lord's answer to Nicodemus cut across his human, traditional, religious concept. The Lord seemed to be telling Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, what you need is not teaching, but another life. Regardless of how good you are, you only have the human life. You need the divine life.

### **SUGGESTED GROUP DISCUSSION:**

1. Why does Nicodemus, a seemingly upright person, still needed to be regenerated or "born again"?

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2. Using the verses, discuss how a person could get regenerated.

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