



STUDY GUIDE

“ILLUMINATION: THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING”
“REGENERATION: THE CHRISTIAN IS BORN AGAIN”
(pg. 154-158)

What is the Main Takeaway?

The Holy Spirit quickens the believer, giving spiritual understanding, and regenerates us, giving us the new birth and enabling the exercise of saving faith.

What are the Potholes, the problems, the alternate views?

It is a mistake to view spiritual understanding as the mere by-product of intellectual exercises or study. While it is essential for the Christian to engage in thoughtful study of the Word of God, mere study alone is no guarantee of truly spiritual understanding.

Some view the new birth as a product of synergism – the unbeliever cooperates with God, resulting in the new birth.

A note on Packer’s use of the term “prevenient grace” at the end of the chapter (p. 158): Packer is using this term in a different sense than is often used when talking about the new birth. Prevenient grace as used in this instance of referring to the grace of God working in individual preparing them for salvation, and will ALWAYS result in their conversion. “Prevenient grace” as it is often used, refers to a general enabling grace, giving everyone the ability to repent and believe apart from God’s specific election of individuals for salvation. This universal enabling grace for salvation is not found in Scripture.

What are some of the Gracious Answers for those who may push back?

Humility and reliance on the Holy Spirit in understanding and applying Scripture is essential – God opposes the proud, including the proud with impressive Bible knowledge. Illumination is the work of the Spirit – not in the sense of giving new revelation, but in helping the believer to see what is actually in the text, grasping its significance, and applying it to his/her life. There are many people who have done deep study of the Bible but remain unconverted and aloof to the Spirit of God. Knowledge gained apart from the illumination of the Spirit often leads to arrogance and self-sufficiency.

The Bible indicates that regeneration is monergistic – solely the result of the Spirit’s work in the life of the unbeliever, changing the heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, and is a result of God’s choice in electing an individual for salvation.

While it is clear in Scripture that God gives grace to all people in many ways (provision, family, health, etc.), salvation is for those whom he has chosen and for them alone, and all of them will be eventually brought into His Kingdom.

What Applications arise from this study?

The believer should rely on the Holy Spirit in studying and applying scripture. As Packer notes, Martin Luther said three things make a theologian: prayer, meditation, and application through testing or trial. True knowledge and understanding of Scripture will only be

accomplished through these and cannot be gained without the aid and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of regeneration helps us to understand the nature of salvation – that by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, God gives the new birth to sinners, making them a new creation in Christ, by grace, through faith.

The doctrine of regeneration helps us in our evangelism. Since it is God who saves and gives the new birth, and not the eloquence of our words (important as they are in accurately communicating the gospel), we can embrace our own frailty and inability to bring others to salvation, and simply pursue faithful proclamation of the gospel – God will use us to call His sheep!

What are some Additional Resources?

<https://www.ligonier.org/guides/regeneration>
<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/spirit-of-light>