

Basic Christian Beliefs (Class 7) –

Salvation: Pt. 1 (Effective Calling, Regeneration)

Introduction

- **Game: Divide the class up into two groups. Bring a puzzle to class that have different pieces that the groups have to put together. Tell the groups that you will give candy to the group who completely the puzzle first.**
- Say: The reason we did this game at the beginning of class is because it illustrates something that we will be discussing over the next couple of weeks. With these puzzles, there are different PIECES that go together to form the completed PUZZLE. When you look at the individual pieces, it is difficult to understand how they fit together. However, when you look at them in their final form, you see that each piece is related together in a logical way. For the next couple of weeks, we are going to be talking about salvation – specifically about the way that the Bible talks about HOW God saves us. Each week we will be looking at different aspects of salvation. These different aspects will be, in a way, like the different pieces of the puzzle. With each week, we are going to put these different aspects (or pieces of the puzzle) together, to form the complete picture of how the Bible talks about our salvation.

Effective Calling

- Introduction to Effective Calling:
 - Say: Today, we are going to be looking at two pieces of the puzzle – two aspects of Salvation. Let's turn to Romans 8:28-30, to begin our discussion.
 - Have a student read: Romans 8:28-30 ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
 - Say: The first aspect we are going to look at is CALLING. This passage says that we have “been CALLED according to his purpose,” and that those “who God have predestined he has also CALLED.” The theological word for this type of calling is “EFFECTIVE CALLING” (Note: The actual theological word here is “effectual calling,” but for the sake of making this clear, we are going to say “effective calling,” because that communicates the idea in a more clear manner. “Effectual” and “Effective” mean the same thing. But because “effective” is a more common part of our vocabulary, we are going to use this term).
 - Write on the Board: Effective Calling
 - Say: Let's talk about what Effective Calling means. In order to do this, let's simply break this into its two parts: (1) Effective, and (2) Calling. Basically, Effective calling means a calling that is effective. So if we look at these two parts we will see what this term means.
- Explain: CALLING in general
 - Say, “let's now focus on the “CALLING” part of the effective call. Ask: what is a call?

- **Activity: Illustrate this in class, by making a call to a student. Have a student come up to the front of class with you, but standing a good distance away. Call him or her.**
- Say: Now, when we talk about God “Calling” people, we are talking about God calling people to himself – calling people to be in a loving relationship with him. In other words, when we talk about calling, we are talking about God calling people to be saved.
- Explain: God Calls only HIS people to himself
 - Ask: So God’s calling means he calls his people to himself to be saved. Based on this understanding, who do you think God calls? (In other words, does God call everybody? Or just certain people?) (Answer: God calls only HIS people [or his elect people] to himself).
 - Reread; Romans 8:30: And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
 - Say: This verse illustrates how God calls his people – the people he chooses for salvation. Now, this doesn’t mean that only God’s chosen people can hear the gospel. In fact, Jesus’ words to his disciples in Mark 16:15 were, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”
 - Everyone may hear the general call of the Gospel, but God only calls his to be saved. This is one of those tough truths that the Bible teaches. It seems unfair to us. But we know that God is fair and just and loving. Just because we can’t understand how God could be just and loving and only choose certain people, that doesn’t mean that it isn’t true. That just means that we can’t understand the ways of God – which is a good thing, because if we could, then we would be God!
- Explain: EFFECTIVE calling
 - Say: We have talking about God’s effective call – about how God calls his people (the elect) to him through the Holy Spirit. But now we are going to talk about what it means that God’s call is EFFECTIVE?
 - Ask: What does effective mean? (It accomplishes what it intends to do)
 - Ask: What is an effective call? What would a NON-effective call be like? (Tell them to think in general terms, not just in terms of God’s call (ie. what would a non-effective call be to a friend?))
 - **Illustrate this in class: Effective vs. Non-effective call**
 - **Ask the same student who you called before to come up from with you (standing a significant distance away from you). Tell the class that you are going to first illustrate a NON-effective call. Call the student (again, use a dramatic voice to make the illustration memorable). The student should not come. Say: This is a NON-effective call, because (student’s name) did NOT come to me when I called (him/her). Tell the class that you are now going to illustrate an EFFECTIVE call. Again, Call the student (with dramatic voice). This time, the student should come to you. Say, this was an effective call because when I called (student’s name), (he/she) came to me.**
 - Ask: How do you think this applies to God’s effective call for his people? What do you think it means that God effectively calls his people? (Answer: When God calls them by his Holy Spirit, they always come to him).

who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³ In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ⁴ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

- Ask: What does Jesus say that a person must do before he or she may be inherit the kingdom of God (in other words, what must a person do in order to be saved?) (Answer: Be born again).
- Explain Regeneration: We need a NEW life!
 - Say: When Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again, this tells us two things about salvation. First of all, the OLD life is not good enough. Our old life is not good enough for us to be saved. Jesus says you need a NEW life. You need to be BORN AGAIN into a NEW life!
 - **Say, we are now going to read 3 verses about REGENERATION. Every time you hear the words "new" "old" "heart" or "born again," stand up and sit right back down.**
 - **Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17** ¹⁷ **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**
 - **Read: Ezekiel 36:26** ²⁶ **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.**
 - **Read: 1 Peter 1:23** ²³ **For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.**
 - Say: In order to be saved, we must have a NEW life – a NEW HEART and a NEW SPIRIT!
 - Say: The Westminster Catechism says that when God calls us and gives us a new life, he does several things for us. First of all, he gives us a new life by convincing us of our sin. You see, without a new life, we deny that we are even sinners! We think we are okay without Christ. When God gives us a new life, he convinces us of our sin. Secondly, he opens up our minds to Christ. He enlightens us to the knowledge of Christ – that Christ came to save his people from their sin. Without a new life, we would not see this clearly. Finally, when God calls us and gives us a new life he renews our wills so that we can respond to Christ. Again, in our OLD self we would NEVER come to God. We would NEVER respond to God's call and be saved. However, when the Spirit gives us new life in him, for the first time we can RESPOND to God's call.
- Explain Regeneration: This comes from God!
 - Say: But this story about Jesus and Nicodemus illustrates something else about REGENERATION.
 - **Activity: Say: To illustrate this, I now need a volunteer who will play the part of Jesus. Whisper to him that all he/she has to do is to say, "YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN" and then at the very end of the skit, he/she is to say "THAT'S EXACTLY THE POINT." Have a student come**

up to play the part of Jesus. Explain to everyone that you will be playing the part of Nicodemus, and that you will be trying to find out what YOU (NICODEMUS) must do in order to have eternal life. (Hint: The point of this illustration is that there is NOTHING that YOU can do to inherit eternal life – instead GOD must GIVE YOU rebirth. Think about how perplexing Jesus’ response to Nicodemus must have been to Nicodemus – a member of the Pharisees who [as a general rule] understood salvation in terms of keeping the law. Nicodemus would have likely understood salvation in terms of what he had done – the good things in his life. And so when Jesus tells him, not that he is saved by any of these things, but instead by God giving him rebirth, this would have been utterly perplexing [indeed, Nicodemus IS perplexed in this passage]. To illustrate this point to the students, as you are acting out this lesson, ad lib how this conversation MIGHT have gone). Come to “Jesus” (perhaps a little bit cocky). Explain to him all the good things you have done. Come up with a list (as if you have a terrific resume). Tell him all the good things you have done, and then ask Jesus what you must do to inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus tells you “YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.” When he tells you THIS, act PERPLEXED. Say something like: “No, no, Jesus, you don’t understand the question. I am asking you WHAT I MUST DO to inherit eternal life.” Then repeat some of the things that you have done (even more fervently than before, as if you are trying to convince him that you deserve eternal life). Then ask him again what you must do. Again, he is to tell you “YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.” This time, get even more perplexed and frustrated, and say to him, “Jesus, I don’t understand. I am telling you all the things that I HAVE DONE. If this isn’t enough tell me what I CAN DO.” Jesus replies, “YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.” Then you say, “But Jesus, I can’t do that. There are a lot of things that I can do, BUT HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BORN AGAIN? I CAN’T “REBIRTH” MYSELF. Tell me WHAT I CAN DO? Be born again? I CAN’T DO THAT.” Jesus says, “THAT’S EXACTLY THE POINT.” (At this point, thank the student who played Jesus and dismiss him to his seat, while asking the class to give a round of applause).

- Say: Do you see the point here? Nicodemus, in this skit, wanted to know what ***HE*** could do. But Jesus was trying to tell him that there was ***NOTHING*** he could do. Instead, God needed to give him rebirth.
- Conclusion of Regeneration: Regeneration is a NEW life that Comes from God
 - Say: Here’s the main point. Salvation STARTS with God. We don’t choose God first. GOD chooses US. First of all, God calls us to himself.
 - Ask: What is this called? (Answer: Effective Calling)
 - Say: Secondly, when God effectively calls us to himself, he gives us rebirth into a new life.
 - Ask: What is this called? (Answer: Regeneration)

Conclusion

- Say: Here is why this is SO important. The ONLY way we have salvation is by putting our faith in Christ. HOWEVER, unless God calls us and changes our hearts, we will NEVER put our faith in Christ. Unless God EFFECTIVELY CALLS us and REGENERATES us, giving us a new life, then we will NEVER be able to put our faith in Christ and thus NEVER be saved. **Salvation starts with God.** BECAUSE HE EFFECTIVELY CALLS US AND REGENERATES US, WE CAN PUT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND BE SAVED.
- Say, “Let’s Pray.”

Basic Christian Beliefs -

Salvation: Pt. 1 Handouts

The first part of salvation that we are looking at: _____

What are the two parts of this?

(1) _____ (2) _____

Who does God call to himself? _____

What does effective mean? _____

Read John 3:1-8. The second part of salvation that we are looking at is _____

What does this mean? _____

What does Jesus tell Nicodemus that he must do to inherit eternal life? _____

According to the Westminster Catechism, what three things does God do to us when we are called and reborn?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Where does calling and regeneration come from? _____

Review

God calls us to himself. What is this called? _____

God gives us rebirth. What is this called? _____