

b. Bible Study

Here are two example studies. Each adopts a different way of allowing the Bible to speak to our 'Regeneration' situation. Try both approaches in your group and gain fresh insights from each.

BIBLE STUDY ONE: Working from the situation to the Bible

- a. Ask your Bible study group to list the issues they see as major challenges of regeneration locally (or further afield)
- b. Working as a group, against each issue on your list indicate any biblical passages which come to mind which have similar concerns or dynamics.
- c. Discuss together what light those biblical passages throw upon your issues. List them.
- d. What does this new insight prompt you to do or to think?

Some people find the second activity ('b' above) rather difficult. After using the group knowledge and information therefore you might take along a Biblical Concordance and look up your key issue words with the group. A concordance lists all the biblical words alphabetically and then directs you to chapter and verse.

Other clues: i. remember that Jesus was a carpenter and builder during the Roman and Herodian period so he saw lots of 'regeneration' first hand. ii. In the Old Testament the book of Nehemiah is a story all about regeneration. iii. You may not live in the city, but remember that, by today's standards, the Bible uses the word 'city' to refer to quite small towns and large villages, so those passages may apply to you.

You will be helped in all this by reading books and journals that make these connections. An obvious choice for our Diocese is, ***Urban Ministry and the Kingdom of God, by Bishop Laurie Green*** (published by SPCK) available from our Resource Centre 01245 294405/06

BIBLE STUDY TWO: Working from the Bible to the Situation

As an example of this method, let's take two well-known passages and see what each prompts us to think and do about regeneration.

First, a more negative reading.

The Tower of Babel: Genesis 11:1-9

- a. Read the passage aloud and note the central events and turning points of the narrative. Notice that the Bible is often concerned with migrations of people. Notice how the technology allows particular choices. Note their fear and their intention. Note how they build and to what end. What does God do?
- b. Now go through the story and look for some deeper understanding of it. You might ask questions like: why does it talk about language? What has language got to do with building structures? Why does God judge them? What might they have done? So what was God trying to save them from?
- c. Acknowledging that this ancient story comes to us from a very different context, nevertheless, what does it say to our situation? Are there any connections with our present 'regeneration' expansion? Does this story point to any dangers? List them – and allow the Spirit to take your imagination on from the story to list other dangers too.

Second, we look at a positive reading.

The New Jerusalem: Revelation 21: 2-4, 22-27

- a. First, read these verses aloud. (there are more details elsewhere, but for now stay with these key verses) Notice that the city is seen as a gift from God. Note what is implied about the function of the city. What is new/different about this city? What is its relationship to those outside it? What must people be like who live in it?
- b. Now look for some meanings. What does this passage say are the marks of a good city (or town or community)? At its best, what can a city be?
- c. In our own situation, what does all this say we must concentrate on when it comes to 'regeneration'?

Finally, compare the negatives and the positives from these two studies (you may of course have found positives in the first, and vice versa) and ask, What insights does all this hold for our experience of Regeneration today? And therefore how should we think and what should we do?