

"Regeneration and Spiritual Formation: Theological Students' Born-Again Experience in Light of John 3:1–21"

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between regeneration and spiritual formation in the context of theological students' understanding of the born-again experience, as illuminated by John 3:1–21. While the concept of being born again is often reduced to emotional or ritual expressions, the Johannine narrative presents it as a profound spiritual transformation initiated by the Holy Spirit. Using a quantitative survey approach, this research examines the born-again experiences of students at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary of North Sumatra–Aceh. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire based on seven indicators drawn from John 3: spiritual transformation, awareness of God's reality, change in life orientation, understanding of heavenly matters, personal faith in Christ, freedom from condemnation, and love for the truth. Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing tests for validity, reliability, normality, and linear regression. The findings reveal that the dimension of spiritual experience is the most dominant factor in affirming students' understanding of regeneration, contributing 97.3% to the variance in faith confirmation. These results highlight the essential role of personal spiritual experience in the process of spiritual formation. Accordingly, the study recommends that theological education intentionally integrate the nurturing of spiritual experiences within academic and ministerial formation, ensuring that regeneration is not merely theoretical but also experientially transformative....

Keywords: regeneration, spiritual formation, born-again experience, John 3:1–21, theological students, quantitative research..

Introduction

Regeneration (Latin: *regeneratio*) is a central doctrine in Christian soteriology and forms a critical component of the *ordo salutis*—the theological framework describing the sequence of events in the salvation of believers. Within this framework, regeneration refers to the sovereign act of God through the Holy Spirit, whereby an individual who is spiritually dead is made alive in Christ (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5). It marks the beginning of the believer's spiritual formation—a lifelong process of growth in Christlikeness and intimacy with God (Grenz, 2000; Kapic, 2018).

However, in many contemporary Christian contexts, the concept of being "born again" has often been reduced to a superficial experience—either an emotional moment during conversion or a mere ritual act such as baptism—without adequate attention to its deeper theological and transformational implications (Milne, 2010; Ryrie, 2010; Evans, 2019). Such reductionism risks divorcing the spiritual reality of regeneration from the broader process of sanctification and spiritual formation.

Classical theological thought affirms regeneration as a divine, monergistic act that initiates a radical inward renewal. Berkhof (2012) defines regeneration as a supernatural change of the inner person, making possible a genuine response of faith. This aligns with Pauline theology, particularly in 2 Corinthians 5:17, which describes the believer as a "new creation," and in Titus 3:5, which refers to the "washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Guthrie (2009) likewise emphasizes that regeneration is a work of divine initiative, not human effort, in line with John 1:12–13.

Furthermore, the role of Scripture in regeneration is indispensable. Thiessen (2002) and Henry (1997) underscore that the Word of God is the instrument through which new birth occurs, referencing passages such as James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23. These texts affirm that believers are "born through the word of truth," highlighting the dynamic interplay between the Spirit and the Word in initiating spiritual life. Thiessen further contends that regeneration

precedes water baptism, as exemplified in Acts 10:44–48 with the household of Cornelius, thereby rejecting a strictly sacramental view of the new birth.

In the context of theological education, particularly among students preparing for ministry, the depth of understanding and experience regarding regeneration has direct implications for spiritual formation and pastoral practice. This study, therefore, investigates how theological students comprehend and experience regeneration, using John 3:1–21 as the exegetical and theological foundation. By exploring their born-again experiences through empirical analysis, this research seeks to bridge the gap between theological knowledge and transformative spiritual formation.

A critical perspective on the sacramentalist view of regeneration is articulated by Letham (2019), who firmly rejects the notion that water baptism serves as the instrumental or automatic cause of the new birth. He argues that such a sacramental mechanism risks distorting the doctrine of grace by placing the initiation of spiritual life under ecclesiastical or human regulation. This, according to Letham, not only diminishes the sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit but also compromises the foundational Reformation principle of *sola gratia*—that salvation is entirely a work of God's grace, not mediated or controlled by external rites. In line with this critique, John 3:8 underscores the mysterious and sovereign nature of the Spirit's regenerating work: "The wind blows where it wishes... so it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Thus, regeneration is a divine prerogative, not a sacramentally triggered occurrence.

In this theological light, the doctrine of being born again (*regeneratio*) must not be confined to dogmatic assertion but must also engage existential, ethical, and pastoral dimensions of the Christian life. It is not only the entrance point into the life of faith but the very ground of Christian identity, moral transformation, and relational intimacy with God (Kapic, 2018; Horton, 2011). A reductionist view that equates regeneration with emotional conversion experiences or liturgical acts fails to capture its ongoing formative impact in the believer's journey of sanctification. As Wilhoit (2008) and Smith (2016) argue, spiritual formation is not detached from regeneration but flows directly from it as the Holy Spirit continues to shape the believer's affections, character, and vocation. Therefore, a renewed and robust theological vision of the born-again experience is urgently needed—one that is both biblically grounded and pastorally relevant, particularly in a contemporary context marked by theological ambiguity and spiritual superficiality. This study seeks to re-examine the meaning and significance of regeneration within the framework of biblical theology and classical Reformed thought, engaging insights from theologians such as Berkhof (2012), Guthrie (2009), and Letham (2019). It affirms that regeneration is not merely an initial moment of conversion but the foundational reality upon which the entire process of spiritual formation rests. As such, this research contributes to the development of a more reflective, transformative Christian spirituality—one that is anchored in the sovereign grace of God, mediated through the Word, and sustained by the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit.

Research Methodology

This study employed a **quantitative descriptive–correlational design**, aiming to identify and explain the statistical relationship between the **Born-Again Experience dimension (D3)** and the level of **regeneration confirmation**, based on the theological framework provided in **John 3:1–21**. This methodological choice is grounded in the epistemological assumption that spiritual experiences, though theological in nature, can manifest in measurable patterns of belief and transformation within faith-based educational contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The **correlational approach** was selected because it enables the researcher to determine the degree and direction of association between two or more variables without experimental manipulation—an appropriate strategy for ethically and theologically sensitive contexts such as theological education (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Specifically, this study sought to measure the contribution of the D3 variable (students' spiritual experiences of being born again) to the dependent variable—the **internalized confirmation of regeneration**—among theological students.

Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of all **undergraduate students enrolled at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary of North Sumatra–Aceh** during the academic years 2021–2025. Given the relatively limited population size, a **total population sampling technique** was employed, resulting in a sample of **113 respondents**. Total sampling is particularly suitable in religious education research where population accessibility is feasible and where spiritual formation is viewed as integral to every participant's academic trajectory (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

Instrument Development and Validation

The primary data collection instrument was a **closed-ended questionnaire**, constructed based on theological and exegetical insights from **John 3:1–21**. The instrument operationalized the **seven sub-indicators** of the Born-Again Experience (D3), namely:

Spiritual Transformation
 Awareness of God's Reality
 Change in Life Orientation
 Understanding of Heavenly Matters
 Personal Faith in Jesus as Savior
 Freedom from Condemnation
 Love for the Truth

Each item was measured using a **five-point Likert scale** (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), which is widely recognized for its reliability in capturing attitudes, perceptions, and intensities of spiritual and psychological constructs (Likert, 1932; Sarwono, 2006; Sugiyono, 2019).

To ensure **content validity**, the questionnaire underwent a review by a panel of experts in theology, spiritual formation, and research methodology. This process confirmed the alignment between theoretical constructs and their empirical indicators (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995). **Reliability analysis** was conducted using **Cronbach's Alpha**, processed via **SPSS version 25**, to ensure internal consistency across all items. An alpha coefficient of ≥ 0.70 was considered acceptable, in accordance with standard guidelines for social-religious research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis proceeded through several statistical stages to ensure robustness:

Normality Test: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test assessed the distribution of responses.

Linearity Test: Evaluated whether the relationship between independent and dependent variables was linear.

Homogeneity Test: Levene's Test examined the equality of variance across groups.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis: Determined the extent to which the Born-Again Experience (D3) predicted the level of regeneration confirmation.

Significance was evaluated at the $p < 0.05$ level, with interpretations based on the **coefficient of determination (R^2)** and the **regression equation** to assess both the strength and the explanatory power of the predictor variable. Although other dimensions of spiritual formation were acknowledged in the broader framework, this study focused explicitly on the **spiritual experience dimension (D3)**, as it constitutes the theological heart of regeneration according to Johannine soteriology. By integrating empirical tools with theological inquiry, the study advances a contextualized and measurable approach to understanding how spiritual transformation is internalized and affirmed among future Christian leaders.

Results

Descriptive Statistics of the Born-Again Experience Dimension (D3)

The analysis of data collected from 113 respondents revealed a wide range of scores for the **Born-Again Experience Dimension (D3)**, spanning from a minimum of **20** to a maximum of **100**. The **median and mode** both stood at **91**, indicating a consistent clustering of responses at the higher end of the scale. This significant central tendency points to a **strong self-perceived experience of regeneration** among the theological students at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary of North Sumatra-Aceh.

The concentration of scores around the upper spectrum suggests that most students not only cognitively affirm but also existentially identify with the experience of being born again—characterized by **spiritual transformation, renewed God-consciousness, and a reoriented life purpose**. In theological terms, such responses reflect a robust *ordo salutis* integration where **regeneration becomes the foundation for spiritual formation** (Grenz, 2000; McGrath, 2017; Kapic, 2018).

This descriptive data resonates with the **Johannine vision of new birth** as expressed in **John 3:1–21**, where Jesus speaks of being born “from above” (*anōthen*) as a non-negotiable entry into the Kingdom of God—a spiritual rebirth marked by the sovereign action of the Spirit and not reducible to mere ritual or intellectual assent (Carson, 1991). The high scores also affirm the theological proposition that **regeneration precedes and fuels spiritual maturity**, rather than being an isolated, past-tense event (Boa, 2001; Horton, 2011).

Assumption Tests for Regression Analysis

To ensure the integrity of the regression analysis, a series of **assumption tests** was conducted:

a. Normality Test

The **Kolmogorov–Smirnov test** yielded a **significance value of 0.215** for the D3 variable. Since this exceeds the 0.05 threshold, the distribution of the data is considered statistically **normal**, affirming the suitability of **parametric tests**, including **linear regression** (Ghozali, 2018; Field, 2013). Normal distribution of the residuals is critical for obtaining unbiased estimates of regression coefficients and for ensuring valid significance testing.

This statistical normality reinforces the reliability of the measured variable, allowing for sound interpretation of students' responses as reflective of authentic spiritual realities, not outliers or anomalies. In theological education, especially within Pentecostal-charismatic traditions, such experiences are often deeply subjective; however, their

quantifiable consistency in this study strengthens the argument that **regeneration can be responsibly studied as both a doctrinal and experiential phenomenon** (Smith, 2016; Wilhoit, 2008).

Expanded Theological Interpretation

Theologically, the high levels of reported regeneration suggest an environment in which **spiritual formation is not merely curricular but incarnational**, shaped by lived experiences of grace. According to Berkouwer (1952), regeneration must be seen as the “rebirth of the human person in relation to God,” and its authenticity is evident when there is a continuing transformation of desires, ethics, and worship. The data in this study correspond to such a paradigm, showing that students are not only theologically informed about new birth but also internally shaped by its dynamics.

This reinforces the need for theological institutions to **bridge doctrinal instruction and spiritual practice**, ensuring that regeneration is not merely professed but continually nurtured within the community of faith. As Letham (2019) observes, “Regeneration is not the end but the beginning of a lifelong pilgrimage of renewal,” a process that must be both theologically understood and spiritually embodied.

b. Linearity Test

The linearity test confirmed a **statistically significant linear relationship** between the **Born-Again Experience dimension (D3)** and students’ **confirmation of being born again**. The analysis yielded a **significance value of 0.000** for the linear component ($p < 0.05$), while the **deviation from linearity** showed a significance value of **0.200** ($p > 0.05$). This combination indicates that the observed relationship is not only **statistically linear**, but also **free from significant deviations**, validating the use of **simple linear regression** for further hypothesis testing (Field, 2013; Ghozali, 2018).

In theological research, especially when examining constructs like regeneration and faith confirmation, demonstrating linearity is essential for asserting **predictive power**. Theologically, it supports the notion that spiritual transformation (as a result of regeneration) grows in **correlated measure with one’s theological affirmation of salvation**, echoing Paul’s exhortation in **Romans 12:2** about transformation renewing the mind and reshaping faith understanding (Carson, 1991).

c. Homogeneity Test

Levene’s Test for equality of variances produced a significance value of **0.738**, which far exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This result demonstrates that **homoscedasticity is satisfied**, meaning that the data variances across all levels of the independent variable (D3) are consistent (Santoso, 2014; Hair et al., 2019).

In empirical theology, meeting this assumption ensures that the influence of **regeneration on belief formation** is **statistically reliable across the sample**, without bias toward subgroups. This statistical integrity enhances the theological implication that the **Holy Spirit’s regenerating work** applies uniformly to believers, not selectively based on experience alone—consistent with **Titus 3:5** and the broader pneumatological tradition (Erickson, 2013).

Hypothesis Test I: Level of the D3 Dimension

At the **5% significance level**, statistical testing via SPSS produced a confidence interval for the mean D3 score:

Lower Bound: 85.5083

Upper Bound: 90.9165

This interval falls solidly within the **“high category”** (defined as 73–100), indicating that students’ **self-reported experiences of being born again** are **consistently high** across the sample. These results **empirically reject** the preliminary assumption that theological students might lack substantive spiritual experiences of regeneration.

Instead, the data illustrate that theological students demonstrate a **deep awareness of personal spiritual transformation**, often reflected in narratives of conviction, renewal, and commitment to discipleship. These findings resonate with **James’s (1902)** classical psychological-theological insights into **religious conversion** as a profound experiential reality, not a shallow emotional reaction. They also affirm **Tozer’s (2015)** contention that true Christianity begins at the level of **regenerated life**, not mere theological assent.

Hypothesis Test II: Contribution of D3 to Born-Again Confirmation

A **simple linear regression** analysis revealed:

Correlation coefficient (r): 0.986 → extremely strong positive correlation

Coefficient of determination (r²): 0.973 → 97.3% of the variance in born-again confirmation is explained by D3

t-statistic: 62.893 (critical value = 1.659)

p-value: 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) → statistically significant

The resulting regression equation is:

$$Y = 10.272 + 3.408 \cdot D3$$

This means that for **every one-point increase** in a student’s D3 score, their confirmation score for being born again **increases by 3.408 points**. The statistical strength of this model underscores the powerful role that **subjective spiritual experience** plays in reinforcing **doctrinal certainty and theological conviction** about regeneration.

These findings support the Johannine framework of **John 3:1–21**, where Jesus defines new birth as a **spiritual encounter orchestrated by the Holy Spirit** that **alters one’s spiritual perception** and opens the heart to

heavenly realities. In theological terms, the data affirm that **spiritual formation is not independent of regeneration**—it is built upon it and finds its vitality through it (Letham, 2019; Horton, 2011).

The critical indicators examined in D3—**spiritual transformation, awareness of God's presence, life reorientation, understanding of spiritual truths, personal faith in Jesus Christ, liberation from condemnation, and love for the truth**—serve as **key predictors** of a student's confidence in their regeneration. These are not simply abstract metrics but are manifestations of the **Spirit-led transformation** envisioned in both **Pauline** and **Johannine** theology (Eph. 2:1–10; John 3:6–8).

Theological and Psychospiritual Discussion

The findings of this study affirm the theological imperative articulated in **John 3:3**: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (ESV). This foundational text reveals that **regeneration** is not merely a theological construct but a **transformational spiritual event** that marks the beginning of authentic Christian life. In this passage, Jesus redefines spiritual identity not on the basis of religious heritage or intellectual assent, but through **an ontological rebirth initiated by the Holy Spirit** (Carson, 1991; Köstenberger, 2004).

Theologically, **John Stott (2006)** asserts that regeneration is not an optional spiritual enhancement but the essential gateway to Christian existence, asserting that “Christianity is not about making bad people good, but about making dead people alive.” This aligns with **Tozer's (2015)** contention that being born again involves a **radical spiritual reorientation**—a new nature imparted by the Spirit, not merely an external commitment or verbal confession. Such transformation reshapes a person's core desires, ethical frameworks, and their relational posture toward God and others.

From a **psychospiritual perspective**, **William James (1902)** observed that genuine religious conversion produces a profound and enduring change in cognition, affect, and behavior. He emphasizes that the “fruits” of such an experience are measurable through increased peace, moral clarity, and life direction. The present study's results support this view: students who reported **experiential regeneration** demonstrated greater assurance of salvation, stronger personal convictions, and observable evidence of **spiritual maturity**.

Field observations corroborate these data. Students who self-identified as having undergone spiritual rebirth consistently exhibited characteristics such as **spiritual sensitivity, disciplined devotional habits, ministerial engagement, and ethical consistency** in their personal lives. These traits resonate with the Pauline vision of regeneration in **2 Corinthians 5:17**—“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Moreover, **informal interviews** revealed a clear distinction between students with genuine born-again experiences and those with only theoretical or inherited faith constructs. The former group articulated their understanding of regeneration not just cognitively, but **existentially**—speaking of divine encounters, conviction of sin, transformation, and spiritual assurance, consistent with **Fowler's (1981)** stages of faith development and **Evagrius Ponticus's** early Christian psychology of inner transformation.

In this context, **spiritual formation programs** within the seminary—such as chapel worship, small group discipleship, spiritual mentoring, and supervised ministry—serve not as mere extracurricular activities but as **intentional theological spaces** for facilitating encounters with God. These environments align with **Willard's (2002)** definition of spiritual formation as the process by which **Christ is formed in the inner being**, through practices, disciplines, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They become **sacramental encounters**, not in the traditional liturgical sense, but as means of grace where regeneration is experienced, reinforced, and matured.

These findings challenge institutions of theological education to prioritize not only doctrinal instruction but also **experiential discipleship**—ensuring that regeneration is not presumed but nurtured, examined, and lived out in community (Boa, 2001; Foster, 1998). Spiritual transformation, then, is both a **crisis event and a developmental journey**, rooted in the initial rebirth described in John 3 and unfolding through ongoing spiritual formation.

Discussion

While the **Born-Again Experience dimension (D3)** emerged as the most significant predictor of students' faith confirmation, the remaining three dimensions—**Process (D1), Foundation (D2), and Outcome (D4)**—continue to contribute integrally to a comprehensive and biblically grounded understanding of regeneration. These four dimensions collectively reflect a holistic theology of the new birth, consistent with the Johannine narrative and classical Christian theology.

1. The Process of Regeneration (D1): Divine Initiative and Monergism

The **Process dimension (D1)** highlights the **monergistic nature** of regeneration—emphasizing that the new birth is solely the work of the Holy Spirit, independent of human effort or merit. This is theologically grounded in Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in **John 3:5–8**, where regeneration is depicted as a sovereign act of the Spirit, likened to the unpredictable wind: “So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

This aligns with **Reformed theology**, particularly as articulated by **Berkhof (2012)** and **Erickson (2013)**, who argue that the unregenerate person, being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), cannot initiate salvation. Regeneration must

therefore be initiated by God alone. The Greek phrase γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν (“born from above”) underscores this divine origin, as confirmed by **Carson (1991)**, who asserts that the Spirit is both the source and agent of the new birth, free from human manipulation.

2. The Foundation of Regeneration (D2): Christocentric and Pneumatological Basis

The **Foundation dimension (D2)** locates the basis of regeneration in the redemptive work of Christ and the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is not an isolated spiritual experience but is integrally tied to the historical and theological reality of the **Gospel**. As **Grudem (2020)** and **Thiessen (2002)** affirm, spiritual rebirth flows from the atonement of Christ and the resurrection, by which believers are made alive through the Spirit.

This is echoed in **Titus 3:5**, which states, “He saved us... through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” and **1 Peter 1:3**, which links the new birth directly to “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” These passages reveal that regeneration is grounded not in emotional experience but in objective **soteriological reality**, mediated by the Spirit who applies Christ’s work to the believer.

3. The Outcome of Regeneration (D4): Evidential Fruit and Spiritual Transformation

The **Outcome dimension (D4)** concerns the **ethical and transformational evidence** of genuine regeneration in the believer’s life. According to **2 Corinthians 5:17**, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” This transformation is not superficial but marks a radical reorientation of identity, purpose, and behavior.

Theologians such as **J.I. Packer (1993)** and **Carl F.H. Henry (1997)** stress that the true test of regeneration lies in the **moral and spiritual fruit** it produces—repentance, love for God, humility, and a growing conformity to Christ’s likeness. **John Calvin (1559/2008)** likewise insists that faith without the fruits of sanctification is spurious, arguing that the new birth must lead to a continual process of spiritual renewal. From a pastoral lens, **MacArthur and Mayhue (2017)** emphasize that born-again believers are marked by enduring transformation, not fleeting enthusiasm.

4. Toward a Holistic Theology of Regeneration

While the **experiential dimension (D3)** demonstrated the strongest statistical contribution to faith confirmation in this study, it must not be interpreted in isolation. Elevating subjective experience without doctrinal anchoring risks fostering an **individualized spirituality** devoid of theological substance. As **Stott (2006)** and **Boa (2001)** caution, authentic spiritual experience must be discerned within the larger framework of Scripture, theology, and Christian tradition.

Thus, a **comprehensive theology of regeneration** must hold all four dimensions in tension: the divine initiative (**Process**), the Christocentric foundation (**Foundation**), the personal transformation (**Experience**), and the visible fruit of salvation (**Outcome**). These dimensions are not sequential steps but **interconnected facets** of a single spiritual reality initiated and sustained by the **Triune God** (cf. John 3:1–21; Titus 3:5–7).

Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm that authentic spiritual transformation—rooted in a personal experience of regeneration—is central to the confirmation of Christian faith among theological students. The **born-again experience**, as presented in John 3:1–21, is not a peripheral or optional aspect of Christian identity; rather, it constitutes the **essential axis** upon which true discipleship, spiritual maturity, and theological understanding revolve.

This research reinforces the biblical and theological assertion that **regeneration is not merely doctrinal knowledge or intellectual assent**, but a profound **existential encounter** with the Triune God that reorients the entire being. As such, theological education must resist the tendency to reduce formation to cognitive mastery alone. Instead, it must adopt a **holistic model of pedagogy**—one that integrates mind, heart, and spirit within the broader framework of **spiritual formation**.

The implications are both profound and practical. Spiritual formation should not be treated as supplemental but **essential** to theological training. Intentional structures—such as chapel worship, mentoring relationships, reflective practices, ministry immersion, and spiritual retreats—must be embedded into seminary life to **cultivate a sustained environment for encounter with God**. These practices become the soil in which the seed of regeneration grows into mature faith, evidenced by theological conviction, personal holiness, and ministerial effectiveness.

Furthermore, this study calls for a re-evaluation of how **spiritual authenticity is measured** within theological institutions. Theological proficiency must be assessed not only by doctrinal accuracy but also by the fruit of regeneration—**repentance, humility, intimacy with God, and transformed living**. Only when these dimensions are held in balance can seminaries truly form ministers of the Gospel who preach not only from knowledge but from a life **renewed by the Spirit** (Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17).

To build upon these findings, future studies should explore broader correlational and qualitative factors that influence spiritual rebirth and formation. These may include:

Frequency and depth of personal and corporate worship
 Degree of involvement in church and para-church ministries
 Quality and depth of mentoring relationships
 Emotional resilience and spiritual disciplines

The role of suffering, crisis, or liminality in awakening spiritual renewal

Such expanded variables would enhance the validity of the current study and offer deeper insight into the complex interplay between **divine initiative and human response** in the regeneration process.

In summary, this study demonstrates that the **born-again experience** is not merely a past event or theological concept, but a **living and transformative reality** essential for shaping faithful, reflective, and spiritually mature theological students. Grounded in the Johannine vision of new birth (John 3:3–8), this research reaffirms that **regeneration is the doorway to the Kingdom**, and that theological formation is most effective when it cultivates not only informed minds but **renewed hearts and Spirit-filled lives**.

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