

Face to Face With Jesus

Blind

John 9:1-41

Leaders Guide

Everyone has a blind spot—that area or subject about which we are uninformed, misinformed, biased, or uninterested. This story will illuminate the danger of that blindness which keeps us from seeing the truth and doing God’s work in this world. We will study what Jesus says and what he does to heal our blindness.

Note to Leaders: There is a short video of this story at the following link. If your group likes videos this would be a great introduction to this lesson.

<https://youtu.be/T4JVRwG3j8M>

Sin and Suffering

The traditionally held belief in Jesus’ day was that suffering was a result of sin. Someone was to blame. They “deserved” to suffer. The debate was focused on who to blame and what was the sin so one didn’t repeat it. Even the disciples accepted that explanation. Imagine how hurtful it was for families that had a child born with a birth defect or disability.

Read John 9:1-7.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- What did the disciples want to know and what was Jesus’ answer? How does Jesus explain why the man was born blind? How do you feel about that?
- In verses 4 and 5 what did Jesus mean by day and night? If there is only so much time to do God’s work, what does that mean to us?

- Jesus' focus is to relieve suffering, not explain it. What do you think the disciples were expecting Jesus to do?
- What is the blindspot of the disciples?

Level B

- According to Jesus, what was the relationship of sin to suffering? Describe a situation you have witnessed where sin was blamed for suffering.
- Why was the man born blind? Why are we all born with "faults"?
- According to Jesus, why couldn't his work be done at night? Are we in a time of day or night? Where do we find light? When should we do God's work?
- How did the blindspot of the disciples focus their attention on a theological explanation rather than a practical way to help the blind man? How did Jesus clarify their thinking and set an example?
- Do you ever find yourself debating the whys of a situation instead of asking how you can help? What blindspot might you be struggling with?

Level C

- The disciples were more interested in the answer to a theological question rather than helping the blind man. How would you explain their blindspot?
- How would you explain the relationship of sin and suffering to someone that held the same belief as the disciples?
- Since we are all born with "faults" then we can all be used for God's glory. How have you seen examples of this in the lives of those around you?
- The theologian Charles Spurgeon suggests, "Whenever you see a man in sorrow and trouble, the way to look at it is, not to blame him and inquire how he came there, but to say, 'Here is an opening for God's almighty love. Here is an occasion for the display of the grace and goodness of the Lord'..." Discuss how we might apply this advice in our personal lives and in our approach to the treatment of people in our society.
- In verses 4 and 5, Jesus says that we must work in the day because night is coming and no work can be done at night. What is the day? What is the night? How does that affect our efforts as Christians?

Theories

I can't believe my eyes! Miracles are difficult to believe and impossible to explain. It's not unusual to want to come up with reasons, excuses, explanations, and theories when

confronted by something beyond your understanding. Even when the truth is right in front of you, your desire for answers can be a blindspot.

Note to leaders: The pool at Siloam was a remarkable engineering feat. The builders of Jerusalem had built a conduit underground to bring fresh water into this pool inside the walls of the city. Siloam means “sent” referring to the fact that the water was sent into the city. It also reminds us that Jesus was sent by the father.

Read John 9:6-12

Answer the following questions:

- Describe how the blind man was healed.
- How does obedience enter into the healing process for the blind man? For us?
- What were some of the reasons people gave for not believing that he was healed? What was their blindspot?
- How difficult is it to believe something you cannot explain? Can something be true even though it cannot be explained? Give examples.

Getting to the Truth

The Pharisees were the most numerous and influential religious sect of Jesus’ day. They originated around the third century BC while the Jews were under Greek domination. Their creation was a reaction to the Greek’s attempt to Hellenize the Jews. Their objective was to protect their Jewish faith. They were strict legalists who insisted on rigid observance of the letter and forms of the Law and their traditions. They were known for their covetousness, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. (www.bible-history.com)

In this story we read about the Pharisees’ investigation of the miraculous healing of the man blind from birth. The phrase “Give God the Glory” is a phrase used to demand the truth (see Joshua 7:19). A faithful Jew would not tell a lie in the presence of God.

Read John 9:13-34.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- The Pharisees were divided in their opinions. Why did some believe and others not believe? Where was their blind spot?
- Who did the blind man say Jesus is?
- Why did the Pharisees question the parents? What was the parent’s excuse? Why

did they throw the blame on their son?

- How did the blind man's attitude change the second time he is questioned?
- Why did the Pharisees throw the blind man out (culturally this would have meant being excommunicated)?

Level B

- The Pharisees were divided in their judgment of the miracle. Describe the justifications used for each side. How can people hear the same story and come to totally different answers? Describe a time when you struggled to accept something that didn't agree with what you believed or practiced. How does a blindspot get in the way of truth?
- The parents pleaded ignorance and threw the questioning back to their son. Is fear a blindspot? How do you avoid difficult questions?
- As the Pharisees started "badgering the witness" the blind man became bold and sarcastic (see verses 27 and 30). Why wasn't he afraid? What point was he making? How do you react to people pressuring you to change your mind?
- How did the Pharisees justify throwing the blind man out (culturally this can be interpreted as being excommunicated)?

Level C

- Tom Wright says that it is astounding how people on opposite sides of an argument invoke God on their side. Discuss how the different views of the Pharisees used God to justify their judgements. Where do you see this happening in our world today?
- The parents were so afraid of the judgment of the Pharisees that they "threw their son under the bus." What situations might result in that kind of fear today?
- The Pharisees stuck to their principles at the cost of the evidence. Tom Wright states "There are some people who not only do the wrong thing, but adjust their vision of the moral universe so they can label evil as 'good' and good as 'evil'." When have you observed this happening in your life? What blindspots do you see in our culture, community, and world?
- The Pharisees abused, insulted, and rejected the blind man. The blind man fought back with words. Discuss the words of the blind man in verses 27 and 30—their tone, their meaning, and their impact.

Was Blind But Now I See

Without Jesus to light our way we are blind men needing direction in our lives. We navigate through fear and darkness, trying to memorize the path to our salvation. We prefer familiar instructions not because they are correct but because they have become comfortable. We fear any deviation will lead us to death and destruction. We allow the powerful to lead the way because we fear a loss of direction. Our lives are lived in perpetual night. We are blind to the true nature of the world until it is finally illuminated by the Son.

In verse 35, the term in the NIV is “Son of Man” but the literal translation from the Greek is “Son of God.” Both of these terms refer to the Messiah and the Jews of that time would have recognized the reference.

Read John 9:35-41.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- Notice that Jesus found the blind man not vice versa. Why would it be difficult for the blind man to look for Jesus? Are you looking for Jesus or is he looking for you?
- How did the restoration of sight change the blind man in more ways than just physical? Have you been similarly transformed?
- Why were the Pharisees insulted by what Jesus says? What were the Pharisees guilty of? What does Jesus say is their blindspot?
- Describe how Jesus healed your “spiritual blindness.” What was your blindspot?

Level B

- If you were a character in this story, who would you be? What have you learned about your spiritual blindspot from this story?
- Have you been blind in the past to the work of God in your life? How could you use your story to help shine Jesus’ light for others?
- Just as the Pharisees persecuted the man in this story, we too will be persecuted by those who refuse to believe (see John 15:18-20a, 1 Peter 4:12-14). Explain how the example of the blind man can help you when you are in the storm.
- How was the Glory of God revealed in the blind man? How could the Glory of God be revealed in you?
- How would you explain the “spiritual blindness” of the Pharisees? What examples of this do you see in the world around you?

Level C

- Jesus had to look for the blind man because the blind man had no idea what Jesus looked like or where to find him. What does this say about people in this world that do not know Jesus? What does this say about our role as Christians?
- There is a big difference between being blind and knowing it, and simply shutting your eyes. Tasker explains that “if you were blind you wouldn’t be guilty” means that they would know they were blind therefore knew needed help. “You remain guilty because you claim you can see” means that they wrongly assumed that they already had spiritual vision and didn't need help. Which were the Pharisees? What is the danger of believing you have the answers?
- Morgan states that Jesus brought judgment to the world by being a dividing line, “the separating One through whom God would judge.” How is this demonstrated by Jesus’ words at the end of the story? How can we reach out to those on the opposite side of the line?

Resources

Books

- Bailey, Kenneth E., *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008)
- Bickel, Bruce & Jantz, Stan, *John: Encountering Christ in a Life-Changing Way* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2003)
- Brand, Draper, England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003)
- Strong, James, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)
- Wright, Tom, *John for Everyone* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2004)

Online

Calvary Chapel Ontario. Study of John (3 part series). YouTube

▶ John 9 (Part 1) :1-12 When I can't figure out God's plan

▶ John 9 (Part 2) :13-34 The Danger of how Pharisees think

▶ John 9 (Part 3) :35-41 • Delivered from the darkness

www.enduringword.com

www.bible-history.com