

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 10

John 9:1–41

True Vision and Blindness

At a glance ~ **Read John 9:1–41.**

Why would a loving, gracious God allow innocent ones to suffer? We've all known someone who as born with a handicap or life-debilitating illness that begs the answer to the question. There is no simple or easy answer to it; but as you read through this beautiful story for the first time, try to catch a glimpse of God's purpose through this man's suffering. Record your initial thoughts below.

Jesus had just exited the temple, passing by those who had picked up stones to hurl at Him. He was leaving the scene of an angry mob bent on killing Him when He noticed to one side a man blind from birth. His own disciples braved the question: "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind*" (v. 2)? We can infer from this query there was a prevalent teaching that human suffering was the result of sin.

Jesus gives an interesting answer, but notice that He does not address the issue from the "big picture," but rather according to the specific circumstances involving this one individual. Reason being: the real issue is, of course, much bigger. Because of man's rebellion—or sin—against God (all the way back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis), we live in a world that is "fallen" or marred by sin. As a result, people suffer unfairly. Before the Fall, God created a perfect world but man's disobedience corrupted it. Now the world is marred and the relationships of people are dysfunctional; everything is out of balance.

Hence, suffering can be the result of sin but that is not always the case. The disciples asked the question because Jewish tradition taught it. In fact, their belief was that it was possible for an unborn fetus to sin. Jesus makes it very clear that this man's blindness was not the result of his nor his parents sin.

1. According to Jesus, what was the reason for the man's blindness? v. 3

What an amazing prospect: Jesus taught that His hour had not yet come, but this blind man's hour had come. God had planned all along to display His nature, power, and glory through one individual's infirmity! One blind beggar becomes the focal point of mankind's continual conflict between the darkness of sin and the light of Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus pauses to consider His mission and who He is there to represent. What does He say? vv. 4–5

With a sense of urgency as time passes by, Jesus gets to work. Before Him stands a man in absolute darkness. He will now bring light into that darkness.

3. What is Jesus' part in the man's healing? v. 6

a. What is the man's part? v. 7

Without a hint of fanfare or spectacle, John records for us this simple miracle in verse 7: "*He went and washed and came back seeing.*" The deeper significance of this miracle will become evident later on in the chapter. For now, notice Jesus uses the simple particles of clay and spittle to display God's work.

No sooner does the miracle take place than the word begins to spread and the questions arise: who—what—where? How could this happen when it's never happened before?

4. What did the neighbors and those who previously knew this man think? vv. 8–9
How did he answer them?

a. What was his response when asked how it was done? vv. 10–11

b. What was the last question they posed to him? v. 12

c. Notice: What is the *only* thing this formerly blind man knows about Jesus?

Perspective ~

Jesus could have touched his eyes and healed his sight on the spot; but He required of him an act of obedience and trust. He had to go to the pool of Siloam—which means “Sent.” He had to go alone and once he reached the pool he was granted physical sight. His spiritual sight would come through a process over time, as we will see. So it is with us. The blindness of this one man represents the spiritual blindness of our human fallen nature before God. People say that “seeing is believing,” but not so in the spiritual realm: *believing is seeing!* It is a life-long process that unfolds through stages of growth as we continue to walk with Christ.

- What does 2 Corinthians 5:7 teach you about faith? If you had to “see”—have everything proven to you before you believe---what kind of faith would you have? Please share your thoughts.

In focus ~ (Key words) **blindness**

Look up the word using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance, etc.) and write a definition.

blindness: _____

The word *blind—tuphlos*—is repeated many times in this chapter, more than any other chapter in the New Testament. The same word is used in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, speaking of the gospel being veiled to those who are perishing. Who does this verse say had blinded those who do not believe? Why?

Take a closer look ~ **John 9:39**

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

“For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”

Take a look back at John 3:16–21 to help you understand what Jesus means by verse 39. What insight do you gain?

The Consequence of Seeing the Truth

Outlook ~ Read John 9:13–34.

John goes on in the narrative of verse 13 to say: *they brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind*. Now the direct questioning begins and so does the testimony about Jesus. The result will be growing division among the hearers.

The opening question is the same: “How did you receive your sight?” The man’s response is also the same: “*He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see*” (v. 15). Those who formerly knew the man were confused, but the Pharisees prepared to attack the man’s witness based on the fact that Jesus healed him on the Sabbath, thereby breaking the law.

1. What do the Pharisees conclude because Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath? v. 16

a. What opposing perspective brought a mounting division among the people?

2. They then turn to the blind man to ask him about who Jesus is; this time how does he answer them? v. 17

John’s narrative tells us the Jews did not believe his healing until the parents were called and also questioned.

3. What did they affirm through their questioning? vv. 19–23

a. What would they not admit?

b. Why were the parents guarded about their answers?

c. How did they deflect responsibility in the situation?

Since the religious leaders had already threatened excommunication to anyone believing in Jesus, these parents were not willing to go any farther than admitting the man was their son and that he was indeed born blind. They knew who had opened their son’s eyes but they were too afraid to say more, deferring any further information to their son. One can only imagine how extremely difficult this situation must have been for them.

Next, in verses 24–34, the healed man is called to testify a second time, and testify he does! In verse 24, when he is told to “*Give God the glory,*” it is referring to the fact that he was put under oath. But his interrogators are not interested in hearing the truth, they have already formed their conclusion: “*We know this Man is a sinner.*”

The man’s previous response regarding Jesus was to say, “I don’t know.” As his faith began to grow, he formed the conclusion that Jesus was a prophet (v. 17). Now, as he is pressed harder and his testimony begins to take form, his witness is uncompromising.

4. As the Pharisees hurl insults and threats in the man’s direction, what do you notice in vv. 25–33 about . . .

- a. His demeanor?

- b. His words?

- c. His boldness?

5. What is the inevitable result of this contentious exchange? v. 34

Instead of dealing with the logic of the man’s answers to their accusations, the religious leaders label him a sinner and cast him out. His is excommunicated from the synagogue—the faith—the Jewish community!

Selah ~

John would later write of Jesus in the Upper Room promising His followers that because He was persecuted, they would also be persecuted. Remember that the man in our story was poor, blind from birth, and forced to beg in order to eat. But going from the gutters of society into the presence of Jesus had not only opened his physical eyes, but his spiritual eyes as well. He was completely healed from the inside out! He is a living example of the indwelling faith of Christ that enables the believer to be victorious and overcome in life!

- Take a look at John 15:18–21. How do these words of Jesus encourage you today?

Progressing in Spiritual Insight

Outlook ~ Read John 9:35–41.

His eyes physically opened to reveal the world for the first time, now the man's spiritual eyes would be opened to reveal Jesus. Once he gained his sight, he lost everything that was familiar, but he did not have to go in search of Jesus. Jesus went in search of him!

1. What question does Jesus ask him in verse 35? How does the man respond?

It is common for Christians to speak to one another about “finding faith” and “finding Christ.” But Christ does not need to be found—He was never lost! We were once lost and He found each one of us. Then, just like this blind man, we went from darkness to light—from unbelief to faith—from blindness to sight.

2. As Jesus reveals Himself to this man, how does he demonstrate his belief? v. 38
3. Instead of faith in Christ, how do the Pharisees demonstrate their spiritual blindness? vv. 39–41

Selah ~

Worship is the proper response to genuine faith. True worship is much more than professing adoration with the mouth; it is living your life to glorify God. It is exhibiting the light of Christ that draws others to faith. As you reach your capacity to worship, your prayer should be: “Lord, increase my capacity to worship You for who You are!”

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you've learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you received _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes