

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.  
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

## **questions**

Read **John 9:1-12**.

1. What was the disciples' primary interest in the blind man and what does this reveal about *them* and their *beliefs* (9:1-2)?

It is obvious that the disciples did not see the blind man as a person who had feelings and who was suffering. Instead they were curious about his condition and used him and his blindness to ask Jesus a theological question. They also jumped to the conclusion that if he was blind and suffering, it was his or his parents fault. Because the man was blind, they placed very little value on him as a person. They saw the man as an abstract problem and a theological debate. They showed no compassion for his condition and suffering.

- ♥ We have an expression that says, "Where there is smoke, there is fire." Using the terms *sin* and *suffering*, make a similar statement that reflects the disciples beliefs about sickness.

The disciples believed that "Where there is suffering (blindness), there is sin."

Do you agree or disagree with the disciples viewpoint? Why or why not?

- ♥ How does **Exodus 34:6-7** help explain the disciples' reasoning?

*"Yet he (God) does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."* This was a well known scripture from the Old Testament and it certainly seems to link consequences to sinful actions, not only for ourselves, but also our decedents. This verse, however, does not say that all suffering is automatically the result personal sin.

- ♥ We humans want to know who is to blame. When was a time that you looked for the hidden cause behind some tragedy?

*Who sinned, this man or his parents?* If the man in this story was born blind, how could his blindness be the result of his own sin? The disciples' question reflects two popular beliefs of the time. The first was that sin began not at birth, but at conception. The disciples wondered if the child in the womb had committed some sin prior to birth and as a result was born blind. The second belief was that souls existed prior to birth and were assigned to different kinds of physical bodies as a reward or punishment for their prior actions. In this case, the thought was that the man's soul had committed some evil prior to being assigned to a particular body. Although these beliefs are found in some rabbinic writings of the time, neither of them are based on scripture.

2. Jesus seemed more concerned about *changing* the situation than *explaining* it. When there is suffering, what are some things that Jesus says are more important than trying to figure out the cause (9:3-5)?

In 9:3, Jesus says that the "why" is not as important as the "how" – **How** will God use suffering and difficult situations to bring glory (credit, honor, praise) to himself? **How** will God use this situation to reveal Who He is and how great He is? Suffering is an opportunity for God to work!

In 9:4, Jesus is saying that "why" is not important, but what you do about the suffering is important. As long as there is sickness and suffering, we need to be doing God's work to make it right. The "day" (the time for doing God's work) will not last forever. Night is coming and time is running out. We can't put off helping and healing and praying because we may not have an opportunity later.

In 9:5 Jesus is saying that while he is present in the world, he is the light of the world – the one who can penetrate the darkness of sin and suffering. Jesus was eager to do what the Father wanted while he still had time. (Now Christ dwells in believers and us the light for the world: Matt. 5:14).

- ♥ Sometimes a person's suffering is linked to personal sin and sometimes it is not. Give an example from your knowledge or experience when suffering *was* linked to personal sin as well as an example where there seemed to be no connection between the two.
- ♥ What is your first reaction to someone who seems to be consistently "down and out": Religious curiosity like the disciples or compassion like Jesus? Why?
- ♥ When you find yourself in the midst of affliction, sorrow, suffering, pain, disappointment or loss, do you usually see it as punishment or an opportunity for God to work and show his glory? Why?

3. In this story, what is the "work" of God (9:3) and what is the "day" and the "night" (9:4)?

The work of God is the bringing of light and healing into the difficult situation. God's work is when light penetrates and makes sense out of the darkness. The work of God is when God is revealed powerful, loving, kind and good.

The day and night seem to refer to time or opportunity. The Bible says that NOW or TODAY is the time to act. We cannot put off what God has given us to do. Time is running out. We will not have the opportunity forever. We cannot put off responding to God and his work. We don't know how much day we have or when the night will come.

- ♥ Why do the images of *day, night* and *light* (9:4-5) fit so well into this story?
- ♥ How does Jesus' statement in 9:4 apply to your own life and purpose? What work has God given you to do while you still have time?

4. Jesus used a variety of methods when he healed, but he consistently required *faith* and *obedience* from those he cured. How did the blind man demonstrate he possessed both these qualities (9:6-7, 11)?

The man let Jesus put mud on his eyes and when Jesus told him to go wash in the pool, he did so even though it made no logical sense. By doing what Jesus told him to do, the man showed both faith and obedience.

- ♥ We can only speculate as to why Jesus chose to heal the blind man with mud made from saliva, but what are some things Jesus may have been inferring from the method he chose (Genesis 2:7)?

Jesus could have been suggesting that he was God and Creator by using dust or mud to heal the blind man. The Jews watching would not have missed this inference.

- ♥ Through what disability or weakness can you display the glory of God?
- ♥ Have you ever been able to thank God for your suffering because of what came out of it? How so?

5. How did the blind man's neighbors react to this miracle (9:8-13)? What does this tell you about them?

The neighbors were so confused about what had happened, that they refused to believe, see and trust the obvious truth. Instead of rejoicing with the man over his healing, they let their preconceived ideas as to what God would or would not do steal the powerful moment. Instead of letting the obvious miracle build their faith and bring praise to God, they took the man to the religious leaders, hoping they could explain what had happened. Unbelief limits what God can do in our lives.

- ♥ When was a time that you were unsure or confused by the way in which God worked?
- ♥ Why was Jesus' method of healing in this story especially appropriate for a blind man (9:11)?

The man could not see Jesus, his eyes or any facial expression Jesus might use to communicate compassion. The blind man made contact with the outside world primarily through hearing and touch, and these are the senses Jesus used to communicate with him and heal him.

What does this tell about Jesus and his work in your life?

Jesus knows what you need and he will meet you right where you are with just what you need.

## Read John 9:13-34

6. How did the Pharisees reaction to this healing reveal their *spiritual* blindness (9:16, 22, 24, 28-29,34)? The Pharisees refused to see the obvious truth that was right in front of them because this would have caused them to change – themselves and their beliefs. Here was Jesus, the Messiah, standing right in front of them – teaching, healing, and doing things that proved him to be the Messiah, but the still refused to see it.

No one had ever healed someone born blind, yet the Pharisees put keeping the Sabbath as more important. They punished others who dared to see the truth. They refused to accept the witness of the man himself. They excommunicated him rather than accept the truth. They showed their spiritual blindness by refusing to accept reality and by refusing to change.

- ♥ Can you think of a time when your preconceived ideas, prejudices or traditions kept you from seeing God's obvious truth?
- ♥ If a person has already decided he or she does not want to believe in Jesus, is it of any value to share the good news of Jesus with that person? Why or why not? Answers will vary, but whenever we share Jesus with anyone, we must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit within us. Is he telling us to share our beliefs or are we acting on our own? The Holy Spirit will not usually lead us to share what is sacred and precious to us with someone who consistently refuses to believe. Living the life of Christ in front of this person is a more powerful testimony.
- ♥ Why does Jesus keep healing on the Sabbath when it upset the religious leaders so much? Jesus was making a statement my healing on the Sabbath. He was showing he was God and that he had the power to redefine the Sabbath. Most of the Sabbath rules were man-made. Jesus was deliberately challenging the religious leaders by continuing to heal people on the Sabbath. Jesus is sovereign over every day and he is Lord of the Sabbath.

7. What was the Pharisees view of sin and suffering (9:34)? How does what happened to the blind man prove their theory wrong?

The Pharisees believed that the man's blindness was caused by some sin he had committed even before he was born. The saw the man as totally unworthy. However, that fact the Jesus chose to heal this man who was born blind proves that this is not the case at all. Jesus demonstrates the man's significance and value by healing him.

8. How would you rate the parent's response to the Pharisees questions (9:18-23)? Was there anything wrong with their answer? Why or why not?

Answers will vary, but one would think that the parents of a son born blind would be thrilled to tell everyone about the miracle of their son receiving his sight. However, they were afraid and that kept them from declaring openly what Jesus had done. The penalty of being put out of the synagogue was a severe punishment and the parents were not willing to risk this. Being put out of the synagogue was much more than not being allowed to worship. It meant a person was completely ostracized from their family, neighbors and community – spiritually, politically and socially. It made a person an outcast. Instead of standing up for their son and declaring the obvious, the parents chose the "safe" answer.

- ♥ Imagine being summoned and grilled by the Pharisees (9:18-19). How would you have *felt* if you were the blind man's parent? From what you know about yourself, how would you have reacted?
- ♥ Have you ever been afraid of religious leaders? Why?
- ♥ In what area in your life do you fear rejection? How do you find yourself reacting to this fear?

9. What are the Pharisees hoping for when they question the healed man a second time (9:24)?

They were hoping the man would incriminate Jesus and somehow show Jesus to be a sinner. They were saying, "Give God glory for this miracle, instead of attributing it to this prophet of yours whom we know to be a sinner because he broke the Sabbath law."

♥ There is something in all of us that loves a good "come-back." Consider the healed man's "come-backs" to the religious leaders in 9:25, 27 and 30-33. Which of them would you score the highest for "Good answer, good answer!" Why? **Have several explain their answer.**

10. The healed man's "good answer" resulted in severe consequences (9:22, 34). What would be an equivalent action today? In your opinion, was standing up to the religious leaders worth it or should the healed man have played it safe like his parents? Why?

**Excommunication would be the closest thing we have today that would be like putting someone out of the synagogue. For the man born blind, it also meant he was cut off from family, neighbors, friends and his community. No Jew would have anything to do with him and probably not Gentile would want to associate with him.**

♥ When have you been unkindly questioned about your faith? How did you hold up under the pressure? Did you have a sense of Jesus helping you in the situation?

♥ In what ways has Jesus upset the status quo in your life?

♥ When have you felt unaccepted by other Christians?

11. The man healed of blindness makes a personal statement of truth and belief because of what Jesus did for him (9:25). Fill in the blanks to make your own personal statement of truth, based on what Jesus has done for you. *One thing I do know. I was \_\_\_\_\_, but now I \_\_\_\_\_!*

**Have several share their statements.**

Read John 9:35-41.

12. Fill in the chart to trace the blind man's progression in his view of Jesus that eventually led to faith.

Verse	How did the blind man view Jesus?
9:11	The man they call Jesus
9:17	He is a prophet
9:27	A rabbi who has disciples
9:33	A man from God
9:38	Lord – One to be believed

♥ How has your view of Jesus and your commitment to him progressed over time? Where are you now in the process? **Have several share**

13. Relate Jesus' statements in 9:39 and 41 to the events in this chapter.

**Jesus says that he has come into the world to give sight to the blind (the man born blind) and to show those who think they see (the Pharisees) that they are blind. To receive Jesus is to receive the Light of the world; to reject him is to reject light, to close one's eyes, and to become blind. The light shines in the darkness. Those who welcome it are delivered into the light, but those who refuse it turn away into deeper darkness. If the Pharisees had acknowledged blindness, they could have been freed from sin; but if they asserted that they could see when they were really blind to the truth, there would be no remedy for them. While the blind man gained physical and spiritual light through faith, the Pharisees lost the light they had and lapsed into complete spiritual darkness.**

**The blind who have never seen are not responsible for choosing darkness. They can choose to obey and receive their sight (and the Light). But those who are so confident that they know everything and have all possible spiritual light will never receive more light. They are blind to the truth and the true light.**

- ♥ In this story, who are the blind and who are those who see?
- ♥ How would you measure your spiritual vision now? a) 20/20? b) near-sighted? c) far-sighted? d) a few blind spots? e) legally blind? What would help correct your spiritual vision?
- ♥ When your long-held ideas, beliefs and traditions are challenged, is your reaction most like the *disciples*, the *neighbors*, the *Pharisees*, the blind man's *parents* or the *blind man*? How so?

Choose one or two of the following questions to bring the discussion to a conclusion.

### **Response**

In this chapter, which character qualities of Jesus comes through most strongly to you: His *compassion*, his *power* or his *wisdom*? How does Jesus' actions in this chapter reflect his statement in 9:5? What actions or words of Jesus do you like best from this story? Why? How does this encourage you in your relationship with Jesus?

The healed man believed in Jesus and worshipped him (9:38). How do you think he did this? What words, posture and actions could he have taken? How will you worship Jesus for all he has done for you?

### **Encounter with Jesus**

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. See yourself having a conversation with Jesus. Jesus came into the world so that the blind would see (9:39). Ask Jesus to show you any spiritual blindness you have. Are you willing to be shown? Willing to acknowledge and take responsibility for what he shows you? Willing to admit you were wrong? Willing to change? Willing to see a person or situation through Jesus' eyes? After you tell Jesus what is on your heart, listen for what he will tell you.