

The Blind Man Encounters the Healer (John 9)

Synopsis

Jesus heals a blind man in this passage while teaching his disciples that afflictions aren't the judgement of God. Jews and pagans at the time of Jesus assumed that circumstances were windows into a person's spiritual reality: if they're diseased in life, they're diseased in spirit. Jesus tells us this isn't the case. The work of the Father is to heal and restore. What Jesus did for the blind man he wants to do for us, and *will*—whether it's now or later.

The **recommended passage** is John 9:1-34, where Jesus heals a blind man that people basically thought was cursed by God.

The win this week is to get students to recognize that their circumstances don't reflect their standing with God.

But Now I See

Read John 9:1-34

Commentary

One of the most interesting parts about this passage is how it starts. The disciples ask who sinned to make this man sick. It was a common assumption in Jesus' day that your circumstances reflected your spiritual condition. The people thought God had afflicted this man because of sin. This is a pagan impulse. Pagans thought of their relationship with the gods in economic terms: they render praise, the gods respond by blessing or cursing them. If your crops fail, if your child dies, if you're beset by sickness, it's because you didn't praise the gods well enough.

This isn't an impulse far removed from us. Many of us blame God for our circumstances. We've lost loved ones and we blame God. We lose our scholarship and think God is punishing us. We fail a test and think God is getting us back for gossiping or lusting on our daily hike through yoga pant forest. Or, on the flip side, we think that if we're rich it's because we're faithful to God, or poor because we don't love Jesus enough. We were all pagans once, and that attitude isn't easy to totally eliminate.

Jesus destroys this notion. Indeed this is one of the things that makes Christianity unique. Our relationship with God isn't economic in that way. The apostle Paul makes this clear. We live in the economy of grace. And thank God. In the economy of merit, the only wage we're due is death. But Christ came to give us life! We don't reap what we sow. We reap the bounties of Christ. Christ desires to heal us. The work of God is healing. The glory of God

does not come through affliction, but through restoration. This is the heart of the Father. This is the work of the Son.

Finally, the people nearby couldn't believe it. We see the same thing today. People say that Jesus couldn't raise from the dead because dead people can't be raised. They refuse to believe because they've already decided. Yet we hear skeptics especially demand signs from God—if only God would write his name in the clouds they'd believe. But would they? Wasn't this man healed and these people didn't believe? Would the skeptic search for any possible alternative explanation (“a person in a plane wrote that”)? This passage reveals the hearts of many of us today. Even when the truth is right in front of us we can miss it.

② Questions

Now that Jesus has left the world, does the world not have light in it?

Is Jesus saying that God makes people disabled to display his works? Making people disabled seems like pretty bad work...

② Application Questions

The disciples thought that the man was blind because he had sinned. What ways do we smuggle this same thought into our faith today?

If you're poor or sick, if you lose your job or scholarship, does that mean God is punishing you?

The man says to the pharisees that he doesn't know everything, but he knows he's been healed. How have you experienced Christ in your life to validate your faith?

Community members couldn't believe that he was the same man because they didn't believe miracles could happen. In what ways could God be working in and around you that you fail to see because of assumptions you make?

This man was healed and then didn't know where Jesus went, but still was Jesus' disciple. Do you let emotional distance between you and Jesus discourage you from being his disciple?

The pharisees were followers of Moses. What does this mean?

The pharisees cared about the law and their own righteousness. How can focusing on our own holiness blind us to Christ (even if we're Christians)?

Imagine being blind and told to go somewhere. Surely it couldn't have been easy. What tough roads do you need to walk down to be healed?





Is healing something that still happens today?

Accountability

This week you can explore the attitudes of your students toward God.

- Are they angry at God for their circumstances? Do they think that God has blessed or cursed them because of a particular virtue or vice?
- Are your students grateful? One of the best ways we can learn to love God is by giving thanks even in tough situations. Gratefulness can change a person's heart totally. See if your students are willing to commit time each day this week to write down different ways that they're grateful to God.
- If there are any skeptics in your group, ask them what it would take to convince them of Jesus' identity as God and power as healer. Ask them if there may be signs all around that they miss because they refuse—rather than don't—see.

Resource Toolbox

-  [Born Blind for the Glory of God \(John Piper\)](#)
-  [N. T. Wright on the New Problem of Evil](#)
-  [Tim Keller on Suffering](#)
-  [Walking with God through pain and suffering](#)