

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: You Have Seen Him.

TEXT: John 9:1-41

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus reveals truth to those who seek Him.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Introduce:

- Have you ever had an eye exam?
- What was the most difficult part of the examine?
- What did you discover about your vision?
- Sometimes what we see or don't see has nothing to do with the health of our vision. Have you ever looked for something, finally realizing it was right in front of you and you just didn't see it?

According to John 9, Jesus, using mud, healed a man who was blind from birth. While this miracle was an act of grace for the blind man, it was also intended to help people see Jesus for who He really was. Instead, it prompted more questions for and criticisms of Jesus. It was through this experience that Jesus again revealed Himself as God's Son, the Messiah, sent from God, to reveal God's redemptive plan to the world. Sadly, most in the crowd could not see Jesus for who He really was, even though they had physical sight to see that the Messiah was right in front of them. They were blind and in need of healing that could only come from Jesus.

The blind man's encounter and healing is introduced to us in John 9:1-7:

As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ After he said these things he spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So he left, washed, and came back seeing.

After Jesus' discourse in chapter 8, either on His way out of the temple complex the following day, or at a later time, Jesus and His disciples were walking in an unspecified area of Jerusalem. They encountered a man who had been blind from birth. Jesus first took the time to explain a theological truth to His disciples regarding sickness. He explained that this man's blindness was not due to his or his parents' sin. His sickness was so that God's works might be displayed in him. After Jesus spat in the dirt, made mud, and daubed the mud on the man's eyes He instructed the man to go wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam.

The Pool of Siloam is a pool fed by a conduit in the southern part of Jerusalem. It was designed by King Hezekiah to provide water during times of siege. The conduit feeding the pool ran almost 600 yards from a spring in the Kidron Valley.

The remainder of John 9 describes the flurry of questions and confusion that this man's healing stirred up in the Jewish community. You will see by their responses how spiritual blindness causes people to miss seeing Jesus.

LOOK IN: UPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Cynicism blinded the neighbors. They just couldn't "see" how this could happen! – John 9:8-12

⁸ His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit begging?" ⁹ Some said, "He's the one." Others were saying, "No, but he looks like him." He kept saying, "I'm the one." ¹⁰ So they asked him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So when I went and washed I received my sight." ¹² "Where is he?" they asked. "I don't know," he said.

Discuss:

- How did these neighbors express their cynicism toward the healing and the blind man?
- If you had been present for the healing of the blind man, what would your response have been?
- How do our "neighbors" today express their blindness to Jesus and His work of redemption? How do they respond when someone is transformed by the saving power of Christ?

Instead of rejoicing over the blind beggar's sight being restored, they were cynical. They had seen this blind man begging for years. John even captures some humor in their cynicism. They tried to rationalize the change that had taken place by arguing as to whether this was just someone who "looks like him."

Imagine this conversation going on and the blind man kept telling them, “I’m the one, I was really healed! Look at me. This is not a case of mistaken identity!” This only led to more cynicism as they asked, “Then how were your eyes opened?” The man told them about Jesus and His instructions which led to another cynical question, “Where is he?” They couldn’t see what had taken place because they didn’t want to see.

Ask: How would you feel if you were the blind man, and no one believed you? How would someone who is miraculously saved today respond if people questioned his spiritual healing? How can we protect ourselves from this type of cynicism?

One might let the neighbor’s cynicism slide but notice how the religious leaders responded.

Religious tradition and bias blinded the religious crowd – John 9:13-17

¹³ They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” he told them. “I washed and I can see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he doesn’t keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ Again they asked the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?” “He’s a prophet,” he said.

Discuss: What traditions caused the Pharisees to question the blind man’s story? What motives were behind their questions? Was it really about religious traditions? Were they trying to rationalize this miracle based upon what they believed man could do or what God could do?

This cynical crowd, including neighbors, brought this man to the Pharisees. They wanted answers because this amazing miracle took place on the Sabbath—how dare anyone heal someone on the Sabbath! The Pharisees asked their cynical questions and the man who used to be blind answered in the same way he did with his neighbors. His story didn’t change.

These religious leaders used the Sabbath as an excuse to accuse Jesus. They really viewed this healing by Jesus as a threat to their power. Jesus was calling attention to their inadequacies, their lack of compassion, and their blindness to the ways of God. While they used tradition as their excuse it was more about their bias toward Jesus because He “performed such signs.”

Discuss: What does the question in verse 16, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” reveal about Jesus? What does it reveal about man? What does it reveal about the Pharisees’ assumptions about human beings? What might it reveal about how they view themselves?

Their final bias was very revealing about their own state. It was in the form of a question, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” They couldn’t see beyond what they knew about themselves and humanity. They should have been grateful that God sent someone who could heal a blind man. Through their bias they reminded everyone that all men are sinners. They revealed that only someone who was sinless could perform such miracles. They revealed that Jesus was sinless because He was *from God* – He was and is God! Sadly, they were blind to their own line of questioning. They still couldn’t see Jesus!

Ask: Sometime believers respond in a similar way to someone who, having been spiritually blind for so long, is suddenly and miraculously saved? Why is this so? How can we protect ourselves from the rationalization and bias of the Pharisees?

One would think at least the parents would stand by their son. Yet we see how fear blinded them too.

Fear blinded the parents – John 9:18-23

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight. ¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ “We know this is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents answered. ²¹ “But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he’s of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. ²³ This is why his parents said, “He’s of age; ask him.”

Guide: What were the parents afraid of? Do you really think parents, under pressure, would respond this way to their son’s healing? Why or why not?

This is a sad story for the parents, yet we must not be too quick to judge. John tells us they were afraid of the Jews. This is an indictment toward the culture of fear that had been created by the community. They had a set of rules that were way beyond the scope of the Bible and these rules were to be followed. If not, then there would be severe consequences. In this case, if they defended their son, they would be banned from the synagogue. They were afraid they would be ostracized by the community.

However, if you look closely at John's record, there is another phrase that's very important. They were afraid because *"the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah."* This phrase doesn't mention the son. It doesn't mention standing for their son. These parents were afraid of being identified or associated with anything or anyone, in this case their son, that might lead the crowd to assume they confessed Jesus as the Messiah. Their real fear was being identified with Christ.

Discuss: What fears pressure us to remain quiet about being identified as one who confesses Jesus as Messiah? What should we learn from the reaction of these parents regarding the pressures from the community toward our belief in Christ?

Finally, the blind man speaks up boldly. He was the only one who could see that day. Everyone else was blind!

The blind man gave sight to the blind! – John 9:24-34

²⁴ So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!" ²⁶ Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ "I already told you," he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?" ²⁸ They ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses's disciples. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don't know where he's from." ³⁰ "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. ³² Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." ³⁴ "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

In the course of his defense, this blind man whose sight was restored boldly asks all those who questioned him, *"You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?"* He was amazed that they couldn't see where He came from! He reminded them that God was listening to Jesus and that, if He weren't from God, He wouldn't be able to do anything. This blind beggar whose sight had been restored saw much more than anyone that day. Sadly, their response was to throw the man out. They neither celebrated his healing nor accepted his testimony about Jesus.

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

This is not the end but only the beginning for the blind man. Later Jesus found him. Here is how John describes that encounter in John 9:35-41: ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. ³⁷ Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." ³⁸ "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, "We aren't blind too, are we?" ⁴¹ "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

What this blind beggar whose sight was restored experienced physically led to an encounter with Jesus that led to his spiritual transformation. He believed in and worshipped Jesus! One would think this final conversation would lead the Pharisees who were still listening to respond in like manner, but they didn't. It only fueled their anger because they realized they were the ones who were blind. They were blind to Jesus as their Savior, but in their rejection of Christ, they did see for the first time, that they too were sinners in need of a Savior.

Apply: What can you learn from the blind beggar's encounter with Jesus? What warnings should we note regarding how we respond when someone's life is changed because of the good news of Jesus?

Jesus tied the conversation of blindness to the one thing that separated people from God: sin. To refuse to see this truth—as the Pharisees, neighbors, and parents did—has eternal consequences! May we have the sight of the blind man. People must see themselves as sinners before they can see Jesus as their Savior. Consider how you should help others see their sin and see Jesus.