**The Blind Man**

* *As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind since birth. Jesus' disciples asked, "Teacher, why was this man born blind? Was it because he or his parents sinned?" "No, it wasn't!" Jesus answered. "But because of his blindness, you will see God work a miracle for him. As long as it is day, we must do what the one who sent me wants me to do. When night comes, no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light for the world."*
* *After Jesus said this, he spit on the ground. He made some mud and smeared it on the man's eyes. Then he said, "Go and wash off the mud in Siloam Pool." The man went and washed in Siloam, which means "One Who Is Sent." When he had washed off the mud, he could see.*
* *The man's neighbors and the people who had seen him begging wondered if he really could be the same man. Some of them said he was the same beggar, while others said he only looked like him. But he told them, "I am that man." "Then how can you see?" they asked. He answered, "Someone named Jesus made some mud and smeared it on my eyes. He told me to go and wash it off in Siloam Pool. When I did, I could see." "Where is he now?" they asked. "I don't know," he answered.*
* *The day when Jesus made the mud and healed the man was a Sabbath. So the people took the man to the Pharisees. They asked him how he was able to see, and he answered, "Jesus made some mud and smeared it on my eyes. Then after I washed it off, I could see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man Jesus doesn't come from God. If he did, he would not break the law of the Sabbath." Others asked, "How could someone who is a sinner work such a miracle?"*
* *Since the Pharisees could not agree among themselves, they asked the man, "What do you say about this one who healed your eyes?" "He is a prophet!" the man told them. But the Jewish leaders would not believe that the man had once been blind.*
* *They sent for his parents and asked them, "Is this the son that you said was born blind? How can he now see?" The man's parents answered, "We are certain that he is our son, and we know that he was born blind. But we don't know how he got his sight or who gave it to him. Ask him! He is old enough to speak for himself." The man's parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. The leaders had already agreed that no one was to have anything to do with anyone who said Jesus was the Messiah.*
* *The leaders called the man back and said, "Swear by God to tell the truth! We know that Jesus is a sinner." The man replied, "I don't know if he is a sinner or not. All I know is that I used to be blind, but now I can see!" "What did he do to you?" the Jewish leaders asked. "How did he heal your eyes?" The man answered, "I have already told you once, and you refused to listen. Why do you want me to tell you again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” The leaders insulted the man and said, "You are his follower! We are followers of Moses. We are sure that God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where Jesus comes from." "How strange!" the man replied. "He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from. We know that God listens only to people who love and obey him. God doesn't listen to sinners. And this is the first time in history that anyone has ever given sight to someone born blind. Jesus could not do anything unless he came from God."*
* *The leaders told the man, "You have been a sinner since the day you were born! Do you think you can teach us anything?" Then they said, "You can never come back into any of our meeting places!" When Jesus heard what had happened, he went and found the man.*
* *Then Jesus asked, "Do you have faith in the Son of Man?" He replied, "Sir, if you will tell me who he is, I will put my faith in him." "You have already seen him," Jesus answered, "and right now he is talking with you." The man said, "Lord, I put my faith in you!" Then he worshiped Jesus.*
* *Jesus told him, "I came to judge the people of this world. I am here to give sight to the blind and to make blind everyone who can see." When the Pharisees heard Jesus say this, they asked, "Are we blind?" Jesus answered, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty. But now that you claim to see, you will keep on being guilty."*

John 9: 1-41 *New Living Translation*

### **The** **Background**

There are a number of Gospel stories about Jesus' giving sight to a blind man (Matt. 9:27-31; 20:29-34; Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-42). Many of these stories have the common elements of the man being a beggar (Mark 10:46-52), the use of spittle (Mark 8:22-26), and Jesus touching and healing the man's eyes (Matt 12:22-37).

John had a lot of fun with this story. Gentiles were an important part of his audience, so he wrote this story in the style of a popular Greek drama. The scenes are arranged in the ancient pattern called a “chiasm.”

The story opens with the disciples’ question regarding the man’s blindness. Popular belief assumed that the man’s or his parent’s sins caused the blindness. Jesus would have none of it. He responded neither was the case and, proceeded to show them the real meaning of sin as practiced by the spiritually blind religious leaders. To them, Jesus' violation of the Sabbath marked him as a sinner, but Jesus demonstrated that the Sabbath was created for man, and not the other way around.

Jesus says that this man’s blindness becomes an opportunity for God’s work to be shown. *Jesus makes important points in this story:*

* Sometimes we are unaware of God’s presence in our lives. God can use a crisis or conflict to help us grow.
* We all experience loss in our lives. The most difficult times in our lives can be opportunities for great witness and growth. These can be spiritual growing pains.
* Jesus heals the man and then encourages him to go to the temple. He leaves his old self behind.
* The neighbors question the blind man and find out that Jesus is responsible for the healing. The neighbors do nothing and miss their opportunity to encounter Jesus themselves. The religious trial begins. They criticize Jesus for not following the letter of the law; healing on the Sabbath! Does God love only work weekdays from 9 to 5!
* The questions from the Pharisees compel the man to make his first statement of faith. He declares that Jesus is a prophet, a messenger of God. He has learned much in such a short time. He’s on the right track but has a way to go.
* The parents are afraid to speak out. They are like so many believers who are afraid and never make a public witness of their convictions. Jesus considers such fence sitting behavior unacceptable. The true path of faith invariably leads to challenge and conflict. The fearful parents do not take a stand in defense of their own child and just pass the buck. Their sin is spiritual cowardice and blindness.
* The faith face-off comes to a head. The healed man mocks the Pharisees. He realizes they are the real sinners. Their spiritual blindness is contrary to the will of God. The Pharisees respond by casting him out of the worship center.
* The man’s faith journey has brought him to the moment when he is ready to publicly confess Jesus as the Messiah. He needed to be transformed in stages. His confession of faith is now authentic. Spiritual healing and faith are realized when we are willing to make a public declaration and “leap of faith.” Jesus has touched his life forever. He is healed.
* There is a grave judgment is pronounced on the Pharisees. They are wrong. They are the ones who are truly blind. Only true believers can see. The true believers are rejected from the fellowship of false faithful.
* The man is reunited with Jesus. The healed man declares he has peace in his unity with Jesus the Christ. Jesus’ light shines bright for all to see.

## Reflections

Helen Keller once said, “The saddest thing in the world are people who can see but have no vision.” Jesus helps us understand God’s vision and purposes for our lives. Jesus points out that the greatest sin is not about immoral behavior but involves ignoring God’s will.

The blind man goes through a time of crisis and but then begins a journey of spiritual discovery. He is literally brought out of the darkness into the light. Jesus has shown him the way.

There are early church paintings in the Roman catacombs linking baptism with this story of the blind man. Both are important symbols of faith and new life. Both enable lives to have new meaning and direction. Both are times of great change.

John was willing to use a popular form of literature or entertainment (in his day) to share this Gospel message. This story reflects key themes of “Oedipus Rex”, a famous drama about ancient gods on Mount Olympus who did not care about people. These so-called gods were entertained by causing people pain.

John’s Greek audience could better “see” what he was trying to say. This is a God who loves and cares for us! We should be willing to share the message anew for a today’s audience. Modern music, drama, and media are just a few ways to tell that old, old story.

John makes a very important point in this story. The true nature of “sin” is not just immoral behavior but more importantly involves our response to God’s message. The man’s blindness becomes an opportunity for God’s revelation. The Pharisees are the real sinners because although they claim to have spiritual sight, they reject it for themselves and others. In doing so, they reject God. They are the real sinners.

Jesus reveals he is “the light of the world.” In the story the blind man goes through a crisis and then begins on a pilgrimage of spiritual discovery. He is literally brought out of the darkness into the light.

The ship captain John Newton experienced this transformation when his life changed from facilitating slavery to freeing people. He became a pastor and began preaching the word of God. In 1831 he wrote a song about this change and quoted the blind man’s words in John 9:25:

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!*

*I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.*

Each of us experiences ongoing struggles or times of significant crisis in our lives. These are times we let our guard down. We need to realize how incomplete we are and how much we need God’s help and love in our lives. We all go through certain phases of spiritual blindness. We all need to make a commitment (like the blind man) to follow only Jesus, our one true God. We need to have courage. True disciples today are open to God’s transforming power and then generously share it with others.

**Strength Finders talent: Ideation**

[**https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252260/ideation-theme.aspx**](https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252260/ideation-theme.aspx)

Those with this gift are “idea” people. They are great at brainstorming and thinking outside the box then sharing new ways of seeing things. They get excited about new revelations.

This man “saw” God’s love made real in his life that day. He clearly believes that spiritual sight is more important than physical sight. His life of blindness led to the revelation of God’s brilliant love.

It’s fascinating that the religious leaders, his parents, and many in the crowds were so opposed to change. New ideas can be a stepping stones to new possibilities and new realities.

**Enneagram connections: Nine**

Nines have the capacity to understand points of view of all the types. Nines can be the source of real peace. The blind man discovered this peace which brings a special connection with God. Nines can also be complacent and not like disruptive change as demonstrated by the religious leaders and his parents.

This story appears to follow all nine types of the Enneagram in its classical order: 9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1,9 (like journey of Ulysses). It also demonstrates the transformational power of the Enneagram. It helps us see things as they really are. We are enlightened. We see.

It’s interesting to note that this story does appear in the 9th chapter of John. Stephen Langton (c. 1150 – 9 July 1228) was an English Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and Archbishop of Canterbury between 1207 and his death in 1228. He was the one who first divided the Bible into chapters and verses to help scholars. He is also credited with writing the Magna Carta which Martin Luther and the delegates at the United States Constitutional Convention celebrated as a landmark document celebrating freedom. Stephen was also associated with the Benedictine order that has Enneagon connections going back to Cappadocia and the early Christian church. Was number this chapter 9 possibly a hidden clue?

[**https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-nine**](https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-nine)

**Questions**

1. John Newton as a slave captain was transformed and became an abolitionist minister. How was he blind and lost? What difference does grace make? Why is it precious?

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.”

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;

’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. (1779)

1. God often uses people, circumstances, or scripture to change our lives. How have you experienced change in your life?

3. Has the Holy Spirit transformed your way of seeing things? What difference does it make?

*PHARISEES.*

*Then how doth he now see?*

*THE PARENTS, aside.*

*What answer shall we make? If we confess*

*It was the Christ, we shall be driven forth*

*Out of the Synagogue!*

*We know, Rabboni,*

*This is our son, and that he was born blind;*

*But by what means he seeth, we know not,*

*Or who his eyes hath opened, we know not.*

*He is of age; ask him; we cannot say;*

*He shall speak for himself.*

*PHARISEES.*

*Give God the praise!*

*We know the man that healed thee is a sinner!*

*THE BEGGAR.*

*Whether He be a sinner, I know not;*

*One thing I know; that whereas I was blind,*

*I now do see.*

*PHARISEES.*

*How opened he thine eyes?*

*What did he do?*

*THE BEGGAR.*

*I have already told you.*

*Ye did not hear: why would ye hear again?*

*Will ye be his disciples?*

*PHARISEES.*

*God of Moses!*

*Are we demoniacs, are we halt or blind,*

*Or palsy-stricken, or lepers, or the like,*

*That we should join the Synagogue of Satan,*

*And follow jugglers? Thou art his disciple,*

*But we are disciples of Moses; and we know*

*That God spake unto Moses; but this fellow,*

*We know not whence he is!*

*THE BEGGAR.*

*Why, herein is*

*A marvellous thing! Ye know not whence he is,*

*Yet he hath opened mine eyes! We know that God*

*Heareth not sinners; but if any man*

*Doeth God's will, and is his worshipper,*

*Him doth he hear. Oh, since the world began*

*It was not heard that any man hath opened*

*The eyes of one that was born blind. If He*

*Were not of God, surely he could do nothing!*

*PHARISEES.*

*Thou, who wast altogether born in sins*

*And in iniquities, dost thou teach us?*

*Away with thee out of the holy places,*

*Thou reprobate, thou beggar, thou blasphemer!*

*THE BEGGAR is cast out.*

CHRISTUS: A MYSTERY, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1872