

Two Kinds of Blindness

John 9

March 1st, 2026

1. _____ blindness (9:1-7)

2. _____ blindness (9:8-34)
 - a. Spiritual blindness rejects truth based on _____ preconceptions. (9:16)

 - b. Spiritual blindness asks for more _____ but rejects evidence when it is supplied.

 - c. Spiritual blindness attacks _____ to reject truth. (9:34)

3. Spiritual _____ (9:35-41)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 9

1. In John 9:2 Jesus' disciples ask an important question about suffering. How does Jesus answer their question? What do you think of this answer, and how does it help us make sense out of the suffering we see and experience?
2. There are two main views on the "day" and "night" in v. 4. The first view is that the day refers to Jesus' life during the incarnation before His death, which is the night. The second is that the day also includes the life of the disciples and urges them to make the most of the opportunity before "the night of judgment" for those who reject Christ. Which do you think best fits the context? Why?
3. Review the following passages where Jesus healed someone who was blind: Matthew 9:29-30; 20:34; Mark 8:23-25; 10:52. What do they all have in common? What is different? What then can we conclude about the method of healing in John 9?
4. Can you think of any modern-day parallels to vv. 22-23 in which someone might be afraid to confess Christ because of the social consequences?
5. Have you seen any of the aspects of spiritual blindness identified in point 2 in your conversations with others?
6. How does the formerly blind man demonstrate spiritual sight while the pharisees demonstrate spiritual blindness? (9:35-40)?
7. Compare 9:39-41 with Revelation 3:17-18. What's the solution to spiritual blindness?

Some questions partially adapted from *Knowing the Bible: John* by Crossway

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Big idea: By healing a blind man, Jesus exposed the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees and illustrated the spiritual sight available through Him, the Light of the World.

Intro

In the gospels, Jesus teaches and Jesus acts, but even the actions that He does are teaching opportunities. They are not randomly included in the texts, but are designed to communicate something about Him.

In John 8 Jesus taught.

He identified Himself as the light of the world who could set people free from sin.

In John 9 Jesus acted.

He healed a blind man, but that action illustrated the teaching that He is the light of the world.

We learn that there are two kinds of blindness – physical and spiritual. Jesus healed the first to expose the second.

1. ***Physical*** blindness (9:1-7)

- a. The disciples asked a question based on a wrong assumption.
 - i. Popular Jewish doctrine at the time that all physical suffering is the direct result of personal sin.
 - ii. Either he must have sinned or his parents sinned
 1. Difficult to see how his sins were responsible if he was blind from birth
 - iii. Same mindset as Job's friends.
 - iv. We might scoff at this and yet betray the same mindset when something bad happens – “Lord, what have I done to deserve this? What sin have I committed that this disease came my way or this tragedy happened?”
- b. Disciples look back and ask, almost academically, “why is he this way?” Jesus looks forward to how God will work in the situation.
 - i. “that the works of God might be displayed in him”
 - ii. Not a treatise on why bad things happen so much as an example of how God uses bad circumstances for God glorifying ends.
 - iii. His condition had been a tragedy all his life until this point. Life was rough as a blind man.
 1. No disability acts, no brail on the doors
 2. If the disciples' question is an indication, they would usually be assumed to be “sinners” who brought this on themselves.
 - a. Similar to some cultures that believe in reincarnation – the poor, disabled, and downtrodden must have done something in a past life to deserve it. Prevents these people from receiving help.
 3. Begging was usually the only option. When blind people are mentioned in the gospels, they are usually on the side of the road begging.

- iv. Now his condition was about to take a staggering turn.
 - 1. Leading to the opening of his spiritual eyes as well as his physical eyes.
- c. The day refers to Christ's time on earth; the night refers to His death.
 - i. **John 12:35** So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you . . .
 - ii. The time of His earthly ministry is drawing to a close.
- d. Light of the world v.5
 - i. Reiterates this great declaration about himself from 8:12 – I am the light of the world
- e. Jesus healed him (v. 6-7)
 - i. Makes a little clay mud out of some spit, wipes it on the guy's eyes, sends him to wash, and he came back seeing.
 - 1. Stated simply, but consider that experience. He had felt the warmth of the sun, but never seen the sun or a shadow. He had touched a flower, but never seen the colors. He had heard his mother's voice but never seen her face. But now he sees.
 - ii. Many times he healed people without any action like this (even from a distance). Why did He heal him in this way?
 - 1. John 4:46-53 Jesus healed the son of a nobleman from a distance without even seeing the boy.
 - 2. **Matthew 9:29-30** Then He ***touched*** their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith." 30 And their eyes were opened.
 - iii. Doesn't tell us so any answer is speculative.
 - 1. It seems to be another opportunity to push the buttons of the Pharisees and expose the spiritual blindness, just like when he healed the man at the well and had him pick up his matt and walk on the Sabbath in ch 5.
 - a. We'll see that they would view the small act of making a tablespoon of mud as "work" and a violation of their Sabbath laws.
- f. Only a few verses describe the miracle. The rest of the chapter details the responses.
 - i. Spiritual blindness of those who should be the spiritual leaders.
 - ii. Simple faith of a man once physically blind.
- 2. ***Spiritual*** blindness (9:8-34)
 - a. Neighbors debate what happened (9:8-12)
 - i. There's humor here – "Isn't this the begger? No, it can't be! He must just looked like him!" "It's me!"
 - ii. Neighbors take him to the Pharisees.
 - b. The Pharisees Question the Formerly Blind Man (9:13-17)
 - i. First of two interviews the Pharisees have with this man.
 - ii. Pharisees divided

1. Some accused Jesus of being a sinner because He violated the Sabbath.
 - a. He “made clay” on the Sabbath – how much clay could you make from some spit on the ground?
 - b. Technical violation of the Sabbath laws enforced by the Pharisees.
2. Others couldn’t believe He was a sinner because He performed such a miracle.
 - a. The first party won out because we don’t hear from the dissenters again.

iii. Spiritual blindness rejects truth based on false preconceptions. (9:16)

1. Rejected Jesus out of hand because he broke their little rules that went beyond God’s Sabbath laws.
 - a. The one who created the very ground they were standing on to have this conversation was right in front of them and they were blind to Him because of their false preconceptions.
2. Modern examples
 - a. People who reject supernatural events because they are inconsistent with a materialistic view. i.e. – God can’t have simply created the universe because that’s not how things operate.

iv. We’ll come back to the way the formerly blind man responds to them.

c. The Pharisees Question the Formerly Blind Man’s Parents (9:18-22)

- i. Acknowledge that he is their son, was born blind, and is now healed but aren’t willing to give Jesus the credit out of fear of the Jewish leaders.
- ii. How does their response compare with their son’s response?
 1. They were fearful and non-committal.
- iii. They were afraid of the consequences of speaking about Christ to the leaders.
 1. Could be kicked out of the synagogue. (22)
 2. Three forms of excommunication found in the Talmud that may have been in force in Jesus’ day.
 - a. Mildest form was applied when someone had insulted a prominent or learned person. For 7 days offender could not appear before the one he displeased so must stay in his house, speak little, refrain from business and pleasure, and manifest his remorse.
 - b. More serious the offender was publicly warned three times at the regular service in the synagogue. During the period of discipline no one except the members of his immediate household were permitted to associate with the offender or sit within 4 cubits (6 ft) of him or eat in his company.
 - c. Most serious was extended for an indefinite amount of time and no one was permitted to teach, work for, or benefit the offender in any way. Exclusion from the religious and social community of Jewish society.

3. Whichever form it was that they were threatened with, it was serious enough to keep them from becoming involved in the controversy.
4. See another principle of spiritual blindness in the Pharisees here.

iv. Spiritual blindness asks for more evidence but rejects evidence when it is supplied.

1. The neighbors who brought the man, the man's parents, and two conversations with the man weren't enough to convince them.
2. Modern examples:
 - a. Emails with an atheist met at student organization fair on campus.
 - i. He would bring up a question. I provided what I thought was a fairly good answer. Rather than responding to my answer he brought up 8 more questions!
 - ii. May be legitimate questions but as it progressed along this path it was clear this was his strategy. He didn't really want evidence. His mind was made up.
 - b. Won't consider evidence for God's creation or reject it when evidence is supplied.
 - c. Discount prophetic fulfillments in scripture and evidence for the reliability of Bible manuscripts without good reason.
- d. The Pharisees Question the Formerly Blind Man – Part 2 (9:23-34)
 - i. "Give God the glory" – an appeal to tell the truth
 - ii. Man couldn't keep up with the Pharisees intellectually or in knowledge of scripture but clearly and unashamedly defended what he knew about Jesus.
 1. He stuck to his story
 - a. Jesus made clay, put it on my eyes, I washed, now I see.
 2. Demonstrated faith but even more he demonstrated **integrity**.
 3. He doesn't understand all the details about Christ, but he knew that Jesus had healed him. Later he comes to understand Christ better.
 4. Application for us: Sometimes we get intimidated by people we think know more than us and don't want to look foolish so we don't say anything.
 - iii. Formerly blind man uses great logic
 1. Only God can heal
 2. Jesus healed me.
 3. Jesus is from God.
 - iv. Pharisees use logical fallacy
 1. "What do you know, you were born completely in sin!"
 2. *Ad Hominem* – attack his character rather than his argument.

- a. See this in politics when a candidate attacks another candidate's intelligence or looks instead of his or her arguments or positions.

3. And they put him out – excommunicated him.

v. Spiritual blindness attacks *character* to reject truth. (9:34)

1. Mock, call people “ignorant,” or “naive” but don't evaluate the weight of an argument or evidence.

3. Spiritual **sight** (9:35-41)

- a. Interesting that Jesus sought him out now after he had gone through the questioning and the excommunication.
 - i. He was probably just severed from his family, friends, religious community.
 - ii. Perhaps these prepared his heart.
 - iii. As if to say, “they may not want you but I will take you.”
- b. The man was prepared to believe what Jesus told him because Jesus demonstrated authority by healing him.
 - i. The Pharisees ignored the miracle because of their hard hearts.
 - ii. The blind man responded to the miracle in faith.
- c. Significant that Jesus said “you have both **seen** Him and He is the one who is talking to you.”
 - i. Could have just said, “It's me” – or “I am”
 - ii. But this highlights the fact that the man can now **see** because of Jesus.
- d. The man believed. (v. 38)
 - i. See the progress of His faith by referring to “the man called Jesus” (9:11), “prophet” (9:17), “from God” (9:33); to the Lord deserving of worship (9:38).
 - ii. Purpose of the miracles
 1. **John 20:31** ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.
 - iii. V. 39 makes the connection between physical and spiritual sight, and the meaning of the passage.
- e. This conversation with the Pharisees may have come slightly later because can't imagine the intimate conversation with the formerly blind man taking place in front of these Pharisees.
- f. Did Jesus come to judge?
 - i. **John 3:17** "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."
 - ii. **John 9:39** And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."
 - iii. The purpose of Christ's coming was salvation not judgment, but judgment comes when salvation is rejected.
 1. It is the inevitable result

2. ex: purpose of the sun is to give light, but when the sun is blocked it creates a shadow. The purpose isn't to cause shadows but it is the inevitable result.
- g. The Pharisees are the embodiment of the judgment Jesus is bringing but it doesn't occur to them that they are blind.
- h. The Pharisees claim to spiritual insight and access to truth brings judgment on them for their sin.
- i. **Proverbs 26:12** Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
- j. Big idea: By healing a blind man, Jesus exposed the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees and illustrated the spiritual sight available through Him, the Light of the World.

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