

BRMC Small Group Study: John 9:1-41

Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

Context:

John 9 and 10 signal a close to the narrative that began in chapter 5 with the healing of the crippled man at the pool on Sabbath. Much of the hostility of the Pharisees were based on Jesus' supposed breaking of the Sabbath to heal the man. This narrative also points us back to Exodus with parallels to Passover and the time spent in the wilderness. In the previous chapter, the Feast of the Tabernacles concludes with Jesus teaching that he is the light of the world and that he is greater than Abraham.

Introduction:

In this study, we will see a blind man gain physical sight and spiritual sight, while the Pharisees prove their spiritual blindness. The man grew up with people assuming that someone in his family had sinned thereby causing his blindness. We will learn how Jesus never condemns the man but instead heals him.

Lesson Objectives:

- See that Jesus is the light of the world, bringing sight to the blind physically and spiritually.
- Learn that there are two ways to respond to the light:
 1. Like the Jews
 2. Like the man born blind

Observation

1. How would you split this chapter into sections?
 - *The sign: the healing of the blind man (John 9:1-7).*
 - *1st response to the sign: the blind man's neighbours question him (John 9:8-12).*
 - *2nd response to the sign: the Pharisees interrogate the blind man for the first time (John 9:13-17).*
 - *3rd response to the sign: the Pharisees interrogate the blind man's parents (John 9:18-23).*
 - *4th response to the sign: the Pharisees interrogate the blind man a second time and excommunicate him (John 9:24-34).*
 - *The final response: Jesus' explanation to the blind man and the Pharisees (John 9: 35-41)*

Interpretation

2. How should we interpret the sign of the healing of the man who was blind in the first section (John 9:1-7)?
 - *We must first remember that just like all previous signs, it is not the way Jesus does the miracle that matters. Since the Bible does not explain why Jesus chooses to use this particular method in this passage, we should not speculate on what the spitting on the ground and making mud means. We do know that he did it this way and that this was his method for this instance. Matthew 9:27-31, Mark 8:22-25, Mark 10:46-52, and Luke 18:35-43 all show Jesus healing blind men in different ways. However, they all point to the same truth:*
 - *Jesus healing the blind man is indeed a sign. It points to Jesus as God and "the light of the world". The healing represents his opening of spiritual eyes.*

- *The Pharisees saw Jesus healing (just as in chapter 5 of the crippled man at the pool) on the Sabbath as work and as breaking the Sabbath. Jesus was seen as 'working' as he healed, and he also kneaded the mud.*
 - *Additional point: in verse 4, the 'night' that Jesus was referring to had 2 meanings. One indicates a time of spiritual darkness and blindness among the people. The other meaning would be his future betrayal and dying on the cross which is a dark period.*
3. Why did the neighbours of the man born blind question him (John 9:8-12)?
- *Due to the nature of miracles being supernatural and difficult to believe, the Gospel would take care to mention witnesses. The neighbours are the first of the witnesses to be mentioned (the second group being his parents). They knew him when he was blind, and they recognised him now with his sight recovered.*
 - *However, they still doubted him as the man born blind did not know where Jesus was.*
4. Why did the Pharisees respond to the miracle in this way (John 9:13-17)?
- *The Pharisees' first response after hearing the miracle was not to marvel and honour God. Instead, their first instinct was to accuse Jesus of not being from God as he does not keep the Sabbath.*
 - *In their quickness to point out this alleged sin, the Pharisees revealed their own spiritual blindness. The miracle served to be evidence that Jesus is God but they did not see that because they could only see that Jesus was a sinner.*
5. How does the appearance of the parents of the man born blind in John 9:18-23 add to the story?
- *This exchange with the man's parents further proves the miracle. His parents testified that he was indeed born blind and can now see.*
 - *It seems as though the Pharisees have already made up their mind about this, instead of taking in the evidence impartially.*
 - *Here we also see how the man's parents left him to defend himself before the Pharisees instead of supporting him. However, later, Jesus found the man after he was cast out. Our earthly friends and relatives may fail us, but Jesus never will.*
6. Why do the Jews and the man born blind have different perspectives in John 9:24-34?
- *We can see that the man is starting to believe in Jesus. His replies are bolder and more confident. Verse 27 could even sound like a defiant reply to the Jewish leaders.*
 - *In the face of persecution and being told that Jesus is not God, the man stood his ground. He was seeing more and more of the truth of Jesus which contrasts with the Pharisees growing more blinded and stubborn.*
 - *The Jews dismissed the authenticity of Jesus' ministry and considered that Jesus was a sinner. They further maintained that the man's blindness was a result of his sin and thus his testimony was corrupt.*
 - *However, the man born blind could only testify to being healed by Jesus and was resolute that only a man from God could do this.*
7. Why did Jesus respond to the blind man and the Pharisees differently in John 9:35-41?
- *The man born blind was ready to believe in Jesus. He affirms this in verse 36 and 38. This proves that the man has been healed both physically and spiritually. He saw Jesus physically, and believed in him spiritually.*
 - *However, the Pharisees became defensive and asked Jesus if they were blind because in their pride, they wanted to be seen as holy people, i.e. people who can see clearly.*
 - *Jesus' reply to the Pharisees applies to us all. When we foolishly think of ourselves as righteous i.e. with spiritual sight, the greater our guilt weighs on us.*

Application

8. Are you spiritually blind? Why?

9. How can we help to alleviate spiritual blindness in our world?