



That you may believe... Leaders Guide for Week 8

(Times are approximate) – start time: _____

Welcome

- Welcome everyone and you might ask them to share briefly about some new thought they have had about Jesus as a result of this study.

(+6 min)

Opening prayer

- Praise, thanks, petition continues to be a good format for prayer anytime. Personal times should add confession of sin.

(+2 min)

Opening Comments

- There was a widening division between belief and unbelief in the person of Jesus Christ.
- This started to become apparent at the time Jesus fed the five thousand, and was accentuated at the Feast of Tabernacles.
- All this was becoming an open breach.
- Many of Jesus' disciples had abandoned His cause (**John 6:66**), and the religious authorities were becoming more active in their hostility (**7:32**) towards Him.
- Jesus' last five or six months were filled with controversy.
- Many attempts were made by the priests and scribes to trap Him in His words and/or actions.
- Jesus, however, was fully aware of their designs and maintained His usual ministry.
- However, His boldness became greater and matched or surpassed their hostility.
- The series of events in **verses 9:1-12**, Jesus curing the blind man probably occurred shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles since Jesus would have still been in Jerusalem at that time.
- Jesus was possibly using this sign (miracle) as an illustration to support His statement in **8:12**: "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*"
- Jesus' healing was an illustration of His ability to restore sight to a man that had been blind from birth.
- It also represented, figuratively, and for the blind man, experientially, the presence of spiritual light.
- An example of this would be the ground covered with a board for a long time.
- When the board is turned over the bugs run for cover.
- But leave the board off that area for awhile, and soon the same sun that made the bugs run for cover will begin to make the seeds in the ground grow.
- In a short time the ground is covered by grass and wild flowers, just like the ground around it.
- This effect gives us some insight to the meaning of Christ saying, "*I am the light of the world.*"
- In chapter 8 the Light made the creatures of darkness run.
- In chapter 9 the Light begins to bring forth new spiritual life and cause growth in those whom God has planted the seed of saving faith.
- Arthur W. Pink, a wonderful commentator on the Gospels captures this difference between John 8 and 9 in these words: "*In John 8 we behold Christ as 'the light' exposing the darkness, but in John 9 He communicates sight. In John 8 the Light is despised and rejected. In John 9 He is received and worshipped. In John 8 we have a company in whom the Word has no place (8:37); in John 9 is one who*

responds promptly to the Word (9:7). In John 8 Christ, inside the Temple, is called a demoniac (8:48); in John 9, outside the Temple, He is owned as Lord (9:36). The central truth of John 8 is the Light testing human responsibility; in John 9 the central truth is God acting in sovereign grace 'after' human responsibility has failed."

- A definition of Rabbi (9:2) – (Hebrew *teacher*) a title of honor and respect given by the Jews to a teacher of the Law. This term in our day means a Jew trained for professional religious leadership. In Jesus' day, however, the term had not yet become a formal title. Instead, it was a term of dignity given by the Jews to their distinguished teachers. The Pharisees loved to be called "Rabbi," but Jesus told His disciples, "Do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matt. 23:7-8)¹
- R. C. Sproul explains the flaw in the disciple's question, which we need to be cautious of doing ourselves.
- *"The disciples were curious about the providential reason for the man's affliction, and they saw two possible options: either his sin or his parent's sin.*
- *Thus the disciples fell into a logical fallacy called the fallacy of the false dilemma or the either/or fallacy.*
- *This happens when people say, "It's either this or it's that," when in fact there may be a tertium quid, a "third option."*
- *There are certain issues that can be reduced, justly, to either/or terms.*
- *For instance, God either exists or He doesn't; there is no middle ground.*
- *But if I say, "Let's paint the house either red or blue," I am ignoring a host of other color options that could be selected.*
- *We are not thinking clearly when we reduce options to two when there are actually more than that.*
- *So Jesus' first concern in His response was to correct the disciples' logical fallacy, which He did with one word: "neither."*
- *In other words, there was another option they had failed to consider."*²
- Keeping all these comments in mind, let's go to the study lesson.

(+12 min)

Discussion of the Study Lesson – (~32 min)

This week's title: The Light of the World - **John 9:1-41**

Highlighted verses: *"Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"* **John 9:35**

Day 1: Read John 9:1-41

1. **Read John 9:1-41** at least once, jotting down initial observations.

- Spend some time discussing what people identified helpful, interesting, concerning, puzzling, etc..

(+4 min)

Day 2: Read John 9:1-12

1. What was the disciples' assumption of why the man was born blind (**verses 1-2**)? What was Jesus' explanation of why the man was born blind (**verses 3-5**)?

- A two part question, be sure to get responses to both parts.

- **Part 1:** Their query, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind*" was probably based on a principle stated in the law: "*He [God] does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation*" (**Exodus 34:7**).
- They seemed to have been taught that if a person suffered from any ailment, it must have been for one of two reasons either his parents or grandparents had committed some sin against God (**Exod 20:5**).
- To this was added the thought that perhaps he might have sinned before birth, whether as an embryo or in a preexistent state.
- Where did the disciples gain such knowledge – most likely from teachings by the Pharisees and teachers in the Temple.
- Such a concept appears in the rabbinical writings.
- **Part 2:** To bring him to God and to bring glory to God.

(+4 min)

2. Jesus states that He is the light of the world (**verse 5**). In what sense is the physical healing a parable of Jesus' spiritual claim?

- "*I am the light of the world*" is a repetition of **8:12**, but it is not superfluous.
- The healing of the blind man illustrates the positive and practical application of the principle.
- Jesus dealt not only in ideas but also in the application of them.

(+2 min)

Day 3: Read John 9:13-41

1. What objections or concerns did the following people have to the blind man's healing miracle?

a) Neighbors **9:13**

- The case was so mysterious that the neighbors took the man to the religious authorities, the Pharisees, who supposedly would be able to offer an explanation.

b) Parents **9:22**

- His parent's feared excommunication from the synagogue so they evaded the issue by saying their son was an adult and capable of answering for himself.

c) Pharisees **9:16-19, 24**

- To the Jews there was only one solution.
- The Law forbids working on the Sabbath.
- Jesus performed this sign on the Sabbath; therefore, Jesus was a sinner in their eyes.
- So they commanded the man to "give glory to God" for his healing and not Jesus.

(+6 min)

2. What is the meaning of **verse 9:39**? How does Jesus sum up this event in **verse 41**?

- This is a two part question, be sure to have responses for both parts.
- **Part 1:** Warren W. Wiersbe brings up a good point regarding this passage.
- He says, "*Realize that 9:39 does not contradict John 3:16-17.*"
- *The reason for our Lord's coming was salvation, but the result of His coming was condemnation of those who would not believe in Him.*
- *The religious leaders were blind and would not admit it; therefore, the Light of truth only blinded them more.*
- *The blind man admitted his need, and he received both physical and spiritual light.*

- *No one is so blind as one who refuses to see, or one who thinks they have all truth and there is nothing more for to learn (John 9:28, 34)."*³
 - Jesus' reply is a paradox.
 - "If you were blind, you would be better off. But you claim to see. Therefore, you are guilty!"
 - Think about it, Jesus is the Light of the world and the future judge of the world.
 - The only people who cannot see the Light are blind people (unbelievers), those who refuse to look (unbelievers who have heard the gospel), and those who *make themselves* blind (claim to be atheist/unbelievers).
 - **Part 2:** The blind man's progression illustrates his movement from darkness to light, both physically and spiritually.
 - The opposite result is illustrated by the Pharisees' response (**9:41**).
 - Jesus' remark, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind," makes Him the pivot on which human destiny turns.
 - The Pharisees, assuming that they could "see" without His intervention, proved their *blindness*.
- (+4 min)

Day 4: Read John 20:31

Consider how **John 9:1-41** relates to John's purpose in writing this Gospel. "*...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*" (**John 20:31**).

1. What do you learn about believing from Jesus' sign of healing?

- Listen and encourage people to share what they have learned.
- (+4 min)

2. Note the progression of how the man describes Jesus in **verses 11, 17, and 33**. What did the man ultimately come to believe about Jesus?

- Called Jesus a man (**11**), then a prophet (**17**), and He was from God (**33**).
- The man came to believe Jesus is the Son of God (**35-39**).

(+2 min)

Day 5: Read John 9:1-41

1. What do you learn about becoming a believer in Jesus from these verses?

- Open discussion.

(+4 min)

2. John Newton's great hymn states:

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saves a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see."

Are you truly able to sing, "was blind but now I see"? How were you blind and what does it mean that you can now see?

- This is a personal question and so be gracious, thankful, and encouraging to those who share.

(+2 min)

Closing Comments

- We can learn an important lesson from this passage.
- These are the characteristics of those who are offended by Jesus.
- First, they are unaware of their need for Jesus.
- They consider the teachings of Christ foolish.
- They are guilty before God with whom they must deal with some day.
- They lack any belief that He died for them, He arose again and will some day judge all peoples.
- How do they differ from those who believe?
- First, they admit their need.
- They cannot see but they know they cannot see and need help.
- They know their case is hopeless unless God helps them.
- They not only have met Jesus but they find His teachings comforting and reasonable.
- There may be much they do not understand, but what they do understand makes sense.
- As they move through their spiritual journey, their faith and belief become stronger.
- They have the Holy Spirit living within them to convict, teach, and guide them as promised by Jesus Himself.
- It all seems too simple to many people – just *believe*, but that is the reason John wrote his gospel (**John 20:31**).
- William Barclay makes this summary statement to Chapter 9:
 - *“It is a tremendous thing about Jesus that the more we know Him the greater He becomes.*
 - *The trouble with human relationships is that often the better we know a person the more we know their weaknesses and failings; but the more we know Jesus, the greater the wonder becomes; and that will be true, not only in time, but also in eternity.”*⁴

(+5 min)

Closing Prayer

- Bring in something shared during the discussion and ask the Holy Spirit to encourage everyone
- (+1 min)

¹ “Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary,” Nelson Publishing, 1986, ISBN 0-8407-4955-4, Pg. 896

² R. C. Sproul, “JOHN,” Reformation Trust Publishing, 2009, ISBN 978-1-56769-185-6, pg. 170

³ Warren W. Weirsbe, “The Bible Exposition Commentary, The New Testament Vol. 1,” 2001, ISBN 1-56476-030-8, pg. 327

⁴ William Barclay, “The Gospel of John Vol. 2,” The Westminster Press, 1975, ISBN 0-664-21305-7, pg. 52