



got life?

The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

HERE'S MUD IN YOUR EYE¹

John 9

I. Blind to the Light of the World

A. A lesson from a cave.

In the darkness of Mammoth Cave, some fish have adapted to their environment by ceasing to grow _____. Obviously, turning on a light will not enable such an animal to see! These eyeless fish help us better understand that two things are required in order to see the truth that is right in front of us:

1. _____: even perfectly formed eyes will be useless in the dark.
2. _____: bright lights make no difference for someone who is blind.

B. Philosophy 101.

The branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge is called _____. It seeks to answer the question: How do we know what we know? Answering this question is challenging because it demands that we think about how we think; that we look at how we look. This is difficult because our eyes can see everything in the universe except—our _____! Thinking about thought is a bit like examining the glasses you wear. We typically look *through* them, not *at* them. Occasionally, however, it is good to take them off and examine them.

C. You can know that you know.

John's Gospel, though _____ enough for children to understand, has _____ teaching about epistemology. By examining themes such as the following, one discovers what John has to say about how we know what we know:

- "To know"—The verb *ginosko* is used 56 times and the verb *oida* 85 times.
- "Light"—The noun *phos* is used 23 times in John's Gospel and 6 times in I John (more than a third of its New Testament occurrences). The word "darkness" (*scotia*) is used 8 times in the Gospel and 6 times in I John.
- "Truth"—The noun *alethia* is used 25 times; its adjectival forms, 23 times.
- "To believe"—John uses the verb *pisteuo* 98 times, but not even once does he use the noun.

All of these themes come together in a dramatic way in John 9.

D. God alone can open blind eyes!

It is important to realize that there are _____ stories in the Old Testament about miraculous healings of the blind. This is something only God can do (Ex 4:11; Ps 146:8). Further, there are _____ New Testament accounts of the apostles giving sight to the blind (other than when Ananias restored sight to Paul in Acts 9:17–19). However, there are more stories of Jesus giving sight to the blind than of any other sort of miracle!² Obviously, opening blind eyes is a

¹ The phrase "Here's mud in your eye" is sometimes used as a toast, along the lines of "Cheers" or "Good health." Though it sounds negative, it actually has a very positive meaning. Its origin comes from John 9:6, where Jesus healed a blind man by anointing his eyes with mud.

² See Matthew 9:27–31; 12:22; 15:30–31; 21:14; Mark 8:22–26; 10:46–52; Luke 7:21–22; John 9. Old Testament prophecies had stated that the coming Messiah would indeed be able to heal the blind (Is 29:18; 35:5; 42:6–7).

powerful _____ of *who* the Messiah is and *what* he has come to do. The physical healing points beyond itself to a deeper truth.

E. Chapter 9 plays a pivotal role in the Gospel of John.

1. Its length, level of detail, and the care used in _____ show us its importance in the broader narrative.
2. It is the ironic and _____ conclusion (Jn 9:35–41) that reveals the primary importance of this story.
 - The blind man _____, with spiritual as well as physical sight.
 - The Pharisees, who claim to see spiritual truth clearly, are _____.
3. The light of the world has come (Jn 8:12; 9:5), and yet many remain in darkness! How can this be? The reason is that light both illuminates and _____. Though its purpose is to enlighten, its presence inevitably causes _____. In other words, the coming of light is the coming of _____!

So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still _____ believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they _____ believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. (John 12:35–41)

II. Examining the Text

A miracle!	The Neighbors	The Pharisees	The Parents	The Pharisees	Jesus
Who sinned?	How were your eyes opened?	This man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath	We don't know how he has regained his sight	We know Jesus is a sinner... and you are too!	For judgment I came into this world
1–6	7–12	13–17	18–23	24–34	35–41

- A. Sight is closely related to _____. Notice how John emphasizes knowledge in the telling of this story:**
1. Three times the former blind man humbly acknowledges his _____: "Though my physical eyes are healed, there is still much I do not see."
 - The neighbors ask him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not *know*." (Jn 9:12).
 - "Whether he is a sinner I do not *know*." (Jn 9:25).
 - Jesus asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "Who is he, sir?" (Jn 9:35–36).
 2. Three times, the Pharisees boldly assert their total _____: "We know that we see clearly!"
 - "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath" (Jn 9:16).

- “We *know* that this man is a sinner” (Jn 9:24).
- “We *know* that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not *know* where he comes from” (Jn 9:29).

B. This story lays out the blind man’s _____ in faith. Beginning from not knowing anything about Jesus to worshipping him as Lord and Savior, the story is a sort of paradigm for growth in discipleship:

- He refers to the one who healed him as “the _____ called Jesus” (Jn 9:11).
- When asked specifically about Jesus’s identity, he calls him a “_____” (Jn 9:17).
- Later, he concludes that Jesus is “_____” (Jn 9:33).
- Finally, he confesses: “I believe [that you are the Son of Man]” and he _____ Jesus (Jn 9:35–37).

C. This story begins by raising the question of the relationship between blindness and _____ (Jn 9:1–4). Both the disciples (Jn 9:2) and the Pharisees (Jn 9:34) assume that blindness is _____ by someone’s sin (the man or his parents). However, Jesus rejects this causal connection. Notice that while the connection between sin and *physical* blindness is non-existent, the connection between sin and _____ blindness is emphasized!

Jesus said, “For _____ I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains. (John 9:39–41)

III. Why can’t I see? Why can’t I believe? Why can’t I know the truth?

A. If you are honestly asking the question, there is _____!

The problem is that many don’t ask because people don’t know what they don’t know; they don’t see what they can’t see. The first step toward sight is the _____ recognition that one is blind. This relates to two very different types of people:

1. Some are _____ blind. They can’t see because they can’t see. For these people, there is great hope.
2. Some are _____ blind. These people have made a choice to reject the light and live in darkness. For these people, time is _____. “The light is with you a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you.” (Jn 12:35).

B. A review of Biblical history can help.

Light has come! The problem is not the darkness but rather our blindness. But God (and God alone!) can still open blind eyes to see the Truth.

1. When Hagar became pregnant, Sarah dealt harshly with her and she fled into the desert. But the angel of Lord found Hagar and reassured her and blessed her.

So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” [or, You are a _____], for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me” [or, Have I really seen him who sees

me?] Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi [the well of the Living One who sees me]; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. (Genesis 16:13–14)

LESSON: To see, we must first realize that _____! The cure for blindness begins only when we discover that God is watching over us all the time.

2. Later, Sarah cast out the slave woman Hagar and her son Ishmael. Again, Hagar went into the desert. When her water ran out, she knew she and her son would die, so she “lifted up her voice and wept.” God heard her cry and “_____, and she saw a well of water” (Gn 21:15–21).

LESSON: We tend to think that our difficulties in life are caused by God's absence and inaction. Wrong! God has _____ the well! But because of our grief, bitterness, and unbelief, we can't see it—until he opens our eyes.

3. Not only are we blind to the blessings of God that are all around us, we are also blind to the _____ that threaten our safety and well-being. Balaam's donkey saw what the prophet could not see: an adversarial angel blocking their path.

Then the Lord _____ of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand... And the angel said to him... “I have come to oppose you because your way is perverse before me....” (Numbers 22:31–32)

LESSON: Spiritual blindness makes us _____ of the dangers when we wander from the straight path of truth.

4. When the Syrian army surrounded the city of Dothan, intending to do harm to Elisha, who was trapped inside, the prophet's servant was terrified; “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, please _____ that he may see.” So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (II Kings 6:16–17)

LESSON: Spiritual blindness makes us unaware of the _____ of God at our fingertips. But again, we can see them only when the Lord enables us to see.

5. After the resurrection, Jesus was present with his disciples, but “their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (Lk 24:16). But when he blessed, broke, and shared bread with them, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him” (Lk 24:31).

LESSON: Before concluding that the difficulties of life prove the _____ of Jesus, ask God to open your eyes. He may be sitting _____!

6. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things _____.... And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that _____ and that he _____ those who seek him... These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having _____ and greeted them from afar... [By faith Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was _____ to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king,

for he endured as _____ him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:1, 6, 13, 26–27).

LESSON: Without faith we simply cannot please God. And faith is the gift of God that makes it possible to see him in _____!

C. _____ God to open your eyes; trust him to give you the _____.

The problem is not the absence of light but our blindness. Some are innocently blind (like the blind man in John 9). Others are willfully blind (like the Pharisees). But Jesus can open the eyes of anyone who _____ comes seeking a divine touch that will enable them to see. But don't delay: night is coming! Those who reject the light will be _____ by its brilliance! Those who receive the light will become sons and daughters of light.

For at one time you were _____, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will _____.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS

1. In this passage, Jesus says that sin is *not* the cause of the beggar's blindness but it *is* the cause the Pharisee's blindness. Discuss this.
2. The narrative describes the growing faith of the man who had been healed: he believed Jesus was a man, then a prophet, and finally he worshiped him as Lord and Savior. What should we learn from this?
3. What have you learned from this lesson about epistemology? How do we know that we know?
4. Are there areas of your life where you just can't see? Describe those areas. Has this lesson enabled you to “see” something you didn't see before?
5. Think of someone you know who is spiritually blind. How will this study affect the way you think, pray, and witness to him/her?

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

By Walter C. Smith (1867)

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In **light** inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.*

*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as **light**,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.*

*To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.*

*Great Father of glory, pure Father of **light**,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
Of all Thy rich graces this grace, Lord, impart
Take the veil from our faces, the vile from our heart.*

*All laud we would render; O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of **light** hideth Thee,
And so let Thy glory, almighty, impart,
Through Christ in His story, Thy Christ to the heart.*