

The Gospel of John, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 14: The Healing of the Man Born Blind

John 9:1-41

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

John 9 is a masterfully told account of the healing of a man born blind, and it works on two levels throughout. Doctrinally, it corrects a simplistic link between personal sin and suffering, it shows the growth of genuine faith under opposition, and it climaxes with Jesus' words about two kinds of blindness and sight: physical and spiritual. The chapter exposes the deadly danger of spiritual blindness that is confident it can see, and it teaches that humility receives sight while proud self-sufficiency keeps people in darkness. The heaviest doctrinal block belongs at Question 9, with significant weight at Question 5.

At the same time, the chapter is rich with formation. The healed man's simple testimony ("though I was blind, now I see") models a faith that does not need all the answers. His growing understanding of Jesus models how faith deepens under pressure. The fear of his parents exposes how the dread of exclusion silences witness. And Jesus' seeking out the man who was cast out reveals His heart for the rejected. The teacher should let the chapter both clarify the doctrine of spiritual sight and search the students' own hearts.

So aim at both: a clear grasp of the two kinds of blindness and the humility that receives sight, and a heart that testifies simply, grows in faith under pressure, and worships the Christ who seeks out the rejected. The disciple we are forming knows they were blind, now see, and bow.

Question 1

Student Question:

When asked who sinned to cause the man's blindness, Jesus answered that it was "that the works of God might be displayed in him" (v. 3). What does this teach us about the relationship between suffering and sin, and about God's purposes in our hardships?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The disciples assume the man's blindness must be punishment for sin, his own or his parents'. Jesus rejects the assumption: "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (v. 3). He refuses the tidy formula that all suffering is direct payment for specific sin.

Correct the formula carefully. Scripture does teach that sin has consequences, but it does not teach that every instance of suffering is the direct result of the sufferer's particular sin. Jesus,

and the book of Job before Him, dismantles that cruel logic. Not all suffering is punishment; some is simply the result of living in a fallen world, and God can use it for His purposes.

Draw out God's redemptive purpose. Jesus does not give a full explanation of why the man was born blind; He points forward to what God will do through it. The suffering becomes the occasion for God's works to be displayed. This does not make the suffering good in itself, but it shows that God can bring good and glory even out of hard things (Romans 8:28).

Apply it pastorally. Help students stop searching for someone to blame in their hardships and instead ask what God might do through them. This frees sufferers from false guilt and gives meaning to pain without pretending it is not real. Ask students how reframing suffering as a place for God's works changes their perspective.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The rejection of a simplistic link between specific sin and all suffering (John 9:3; Job).
- Suffering as sometimes the result of a fallen world, not personal punishment.
- God's power to display His works and bring good even through hardship (Romans 8:28).
- Freedom from false guilt in suffering.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Jesus' answer teach about suffering and sin?
- Why are we so quick to look for someone to blame?
- How does asking "what might God do through this?" change your view of hardship?

Question 2

Student Question:

The man's testimony was disarmingly simple: "though I was blind, now I see" (v. 25). When you are pressed about your faith and feel you do not have all the answers, how can the simple testimony of what Christ has done in you be enough?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up the healed man's famous reply under interrogation: "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (v. 25). He could not match the scholars in argument, but he could not be argued out of his experience of Christ.

Help students value the power of simple testimony. The man did not have a developed theology; he had an undeniable change. Sometimes the most powerful witness we can offer is not a clever argument but the honest report of what Christ has done in us. No one can refute a changed life.

Free students from the pressure to have all the answers. Many stay silent about Christ because they fear hard questions they cannot answer. But the man born blind shows that we do not need to win every debate; we can simply tell what we know: I was blind, now I see. Our testimony is enough.

Press for their own version. Ask each student to articulate their “I was blind, now I see,” the concrete change Christ has made in them, even if they cannot explain everything. Encourage them that this simple testimony, honestly told, is a faithful and powerful witness they can offer anyone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The power of simple personal testimony to Christ’s work.
- Witness that does not depend on having all the answers.
- A changed life as evidence that cannot be argued away.
- Faithful testimony available to every believer.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the “I was blind, now I see” of your own story?
- How can simple testimony be enough when you lack all the answers?
- Whom could you share that testimony with this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

As the man was questioned, his understanding of Jesus grew from “the man called Jesus,” to “a prophet,” to one who is “from God,” until he worshiped Him (vv. 11, 17, 33, 38). What does this growth teach us about how faith deepens, especially under opposition?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

One of the most striking features of the chapter is the growth of the healed man’s understanding of Jesus. He moves from “the man called Jesus” (v. 11), to “He is a prophet” (v. 17), to one who must be “from God” (v. 33), to falling down and worshipping Him as Lord (v. 38). His faith deepens step by step.

Note when this growth happens: under opposition. The more the authorities pressed him to deny Christ, the more clearly he came to see who Christ is. Opposition did not destroy his faith; it refined and deepened it. Being forced to defend what he knew drove him to understand it better.

Draw out the encouragement. Faith often grows in stages, not all at once, and it frequently grows most under pressure. Students who feel their faith is immature can take heart: the man

born blind did not begin with full understanding, but he kept responding honestly to the light he had, and his faith grew into worship.

Apply it. Encourage students to keep moving toward Christ with the light they have, trusting that understanding deepens as they follow. And reframe opposition: hostility to our faith, handled honestly, can become an occasion for deeper conviction rather than collapse. Ask where their faith is currently being stretched and how they might let that stretch deepen rather than diminish it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith deepening in stages, often under opposition (John 9:11, 17, 33, 38).
- Opposition as an occasion for refining and strengthening faith.
- Responding honestly to the light we have as the path to growth.
- Faith maturing into worship.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the man's growth teach about how faith deepens?
- How can opposition strengthen rather than destroy faith?
- Where is your faith being stretched right now?

Question 4

Student Question:

The healed man's parents were afraid to speak because they feared being "put out of the synagogue" (vv. 22–23). Where does fear of rejection or exclusion tempt you to stay silent about Christ, and what would courage look like for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up the fear of the man's parents. They knew their son had been healed, but "they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue" (v. 22). So they deflected: "Ask him; he is of age" (v. 23).

Help students recognize the same fear. The dread of exclusion, being put out of a group, losing standing, being rejected by family, friends, or community, is a powerful silencer. The parents loved their son and rejoiced in his healing, yet fear of the synagogue kept them from confessing Christ.

Locate where this operates for students. For some it is fear of losing a job or a friendship; for others, exclusion from a social circle or even tension within a family. The fear is real, and the cost can be real. But Jesus calls His followers to confess Him before others regardless (Matthew 10:32–33).

Call them toward courage without minimizing the cost. Confessing Christ may indeed cost something, as it cost the healed man his place in the synagogue. But Jesus sought him out and revealed Himself to him, a reminder that what we lose for Christ, we gain back in Him. Ask each student where fear of rejection silences them and what one courageous confession would look like.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fear of exclusion as a silencer of witness (John 9:22–23).
- The real cost of confessing Christ before others.
- The call to confess Christ regardless of the cost (Matthew 10:32–33).
- What we lose for Christ gained back in Him.

Discussion Prompts

- Where does fear of rejection tempt you to stay silent about Christ?
- What might confessing Him cost you, and is He worth it?
- What would one courageous confession look like for you?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind” (v. 39). What are the two kinds of blindness and sight in this chapter, and why is spiritual blindness more dangerous than physical blindness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jesus interprets the whole episode: “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind” (v. 39). The chapter is built on a double meaning of blindness and sight, physical and spiritual.

Lay out the two kinds. There is physical blindness and sight, which the man’s healing addresses. And there is spiritual blindness and sight, the ability or inability to perceive who Jesus is. The man born physically blind comes to see spiritually and worships; the leaders who see physically remain spiritually blind to the Son of God before them.

Explain why spiritual blindness is more dangerous. Physical blindness is a hardship, but it does not separate a person from God. Spiritual blindness, the inability or refusal to see Christ, is deadly, because it leaves a person in darkness about the only One who can save. Worse, it often comes dressed as confident sight, which makes it harder to heal.

Apply it soberly. The most dangerous condition in the chapter is not the man’s blindness but the leaders’ confident blindness. Help students see that spiritual sight is a gift to be sought humbly,

not a possession to be assumed. Ask how they can cultivate the humble desire to truly see Christ rather than presuming they already see clearly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The double meaning of blindness and sight, physical and spiritual (John 9:39).
- Spiritual blindness as more dangerous than physical blindness.
- Spiritual blindness often disguised as confident sight.
- Spiritual sight as a gift sought in humility (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Discussion Prompts

- What are the two kinds of blindness and sight in this chapter?
- Why is spiritual blindness more dangerous than physical blindness?
- How can you seek true spiritual sight rather than presume on it?

Question 6

Student Question:

The religious leaders were confident they could see, yet were blind to the Son of God in front of them (vv. 40–41). Where might you be overconfident that you “see” clearly, and how do you guard against that kind of blindness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up the leaders’ confident blindness. They said, “Are we also blind?” and Jesus answered, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains” (vv. 40–41). Their certainty that they could see was precisely what kept them blind.

Draw out the danger of overconfidence. The leaders were sure they understood God, sure they had the truth, sure they could judge Jesus. That very certainty closed them to the Son of God standing before them. Confidence that we already see can be the thing that blinds us most.

Apply it honestly to ourselves. We can be overconfident about our own understanding, our reading of a situation, our spiritual maturity, our doctrinal correctness, in ways that close us to correction and to Christ. The most spiritually dangerous people in this chapter were the ones most sure they were right.

Press toward humble guarding. Ask students where they might be overconfident that they “see” clearly, and how they guard against that blindness. The safeguards are humility, a teachable spirit, openness to Scripture even when it corrects us, and a willingness to admit we may be wrong. Those who know they need sight are the ones who receive it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Overconfidence in our own sight as a cause of blindness (John 9:40–41).
- Certainty that closes us to correction and to Christ.
- Humility and teachability as safeguards against spiritual blindness.
- The connection between admitting need and receiving sight.

Discussion Prompts

- Where might you be overconfident that you see clearly?
- How can certainty close us to Christ and correction?
- What safeguards keep you teachable and humble?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jesus deliberately healed on the Sabbath again, and the leaders said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath” (v. 16). What does their reaction reveal about how rules can blind us to the works and heart of God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Once again Jesus heals on the Sabbath, and once again the leaders use it against Him: “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath” (v. 16). A miracle that should have led them to worship instead triggered their rule-based rejection.

Draw out how rules can blind. The leaders had so absolutized their interpretation of the Sabbath that they could not see the obvious work of God in front of them. Their framework left no room for what God was actually doing. Their rule-keeping became a lens that filtered out the Lord Himself.

Be careful and balanced. The problem was not reverence for God’s law but the elevation of their traditions above the heart and works of God. When our rules, even good ones, become the final measure, we can find ourselves opposing what God is doing because it does not fit our categories.

Apply it. Help students examine where their own frameworks, traditions, or expectations might blind them to the works and heart of God. The aim is not to despise order or standards but to hold them under God, so that we never let our categories keep us from recognizing Him. Ask where they may have let a rule eclipse the heart of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Rules and traditions absolutized so as to blind us to God’s works (John 9:16).
- The danger of letting our categories become the final measure.
- Reverence for God’s law without elevating tradition above His heart.
- Recognizing the works and heart of God even when they surprise us.

Discussion Prompts

- How did the leaders' rules blind them to God's work?
- Where might your frameworks blind you to what God is doing?
- How do we honor order without letting it eclipse God's heart?

Question 8

Student Question:

After the man was cast out, "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and... found him" (v. 35). When have you felt cast out or rejected, and how does it comfort you that Jesus seeks out those whom others push away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up a tender moment: "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'" (v. 35). The man lost his place in the synagogue for confessing Christ, and Christ immediately came looking for him.

Draw out the comfort. The man was rejected by the religious establishment, but he was sought out by the Lord Himself. What he lost among men, he more than gained in Christ. Jesus consistently seeks out those whom the religious system pushes away, the outcast, the excluded, the rejected.

Apply it to the experience of rejection. Many people carry the wound of being cast out, by a group, a church, a family, a community. This passage speaks directly to them: the rejection of others is not the last word, and Jesus draws near to those who are pushed away. He finds the one who was cast out.

Press for personal application. Ask students when they have felt cast out or rejected, and invite them to receive the comfort that Jesus seeks out the rejected. Encourage them, too, to imitate Him by drawing near to those whom others exclude. The Christ who found the healed man still finds the outcast.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ seeking out those rejected by the religious system (John 9:35).
- What we lose for Christ gained back in Him.
- Comfort for those who carry the wound of rejection.
- The call to draw near to the excluded as Christ does.

Discussion Prompts

- When have you felt cast out or rejected?
- How does it comfort you that Jesus seeks out the rejected?

- Whom might you draw near to as Christ drew near to this man?

Question 9

Student Question:

The chapter contrasts a man with little theological training who came to see and worship Christ, with learned leaders who remained blind. Jesus told them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains” (v. 41). What does this teach about the kind of humility that receives spiritual sight, and the kind of proud self-sufficiency that keeps people in darkness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, gathering the chapter’s central contrast. On one side stands a man with little theological training who progressed from darkness to sight to worship. On the other stand learned religious leaders who remained blind. Jesus’ verdict: “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains” (v. 41).

Draw out the kind of humility that receives sight. The healed man had no status, no theological credentials, and no illusions about his own importance. He simply responded honestly to Christ, followed the light he had, and was willing to be taught. That humble, teachable openness is the posture that receives spiritual sight. God gives sight to those who know they need it (compare Matthew 11:25; 1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

Expose the proud self-sufficiency that keeps people blind. The leaders’ problem was not lack of intelligence or access; it was pride. Their confidence that they already saw, their unwillingness to be taught by an unschooled man or by Jesus, and their need to protect their standing kept them in darkness. Self-sufficiency is spiritually blinding. Those who insist “we see” while refusing Christ remain in their guilt.

Connect this to the doctrines of the heart we have been tracing. People are not kept from Christ mainly by lack of evidence but by the posture of the heart. The proud, who think they have no need, cannot receive what only the humble will take. This is why Jesus repeatedly says the kingdom belongs to those who become like children and why God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

Bring it to honest self-examination. The frightening thing about the leaders is that they were the religious experts, and yet they were blind. Help students ask whether they have the humble, teachable heart of the healed man or the proud self-sufficiency of the leaders. The way to sight is not to claim we see but to come to Christ confessing our need. Let students leave longing to see Him more, not assuming they already see fully.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Humble, teachable faith as the posture that receives spiritual sight (John 9:38; Matthew 11:25).
- Proud self-sufficiency as what keeps people in spiritual darkness (John 9:41).
- God choosing the lowly and resisting the proud (1 Corinthians 1:26–29; James 4:6).
- The heart's posture, not lack of evidence, as the real barrier to seeing Christ.
- Spiritual sight received by those who confess their need.

Discussion Prompts

- What kind of humility receives spiritual sight?
- How does proud self-sufficiency keep people in darkness?
- Do you have the teachable heart of the healed man, or the leaders' certainty?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over this story of a man who moved from darkness to sight to worship. What is one specific way Jesus is forming you to see Him more clearly and to worship Him more truly?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question gathers the chapter's movement from darkness to sight to worship and asks for a personal response. The aim is to see Christ more clearly and to worship Him more truly.

Help students locate themselves in the story. We are all, by nature, the man born blind, in need of sight we cannot give ourselves. The Christian life is a continual coming to see Christ more clearly and bowing before Him more fully. The chapter ends not in argument but in worship: "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him" (v. 38).

Make it concrete. Ask each student to name one way Jesus is forming them to see Him more clearly, perhaps by laying down a particular overconfidence, by responding to the light they have, by reading Scripture with a more teachable heart, and one way they will worship Him more truly this week.

Close by holding sight and worship together. To truly see Christ is to worship Him; growing sight leads to deeper worship. Let students leave with the healed man's posture, humble, grateful, and on their knees, saying, "Though I was blind, now I see," and "Lord, I believe."

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The movement from spiritual blindness to sight to worship.
- Seeing Christ clearly as the path to true worship.
- A teachable, humble heart as the posture of growing sight.
- Concrete, specific formation as the goal of the lesson.

Discussion Prompts

- How is Jesus forming you to see Him more clearly?
- What overconfidence might you need to lay down to see better?
- How will you worship Him more truly this week?