

So Who's Really Blind? by Viktoriya Lebzyak

Key Verse: "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind" John 9:39.

Faith Story: John 9:1-41

Faith Focus:

When the disciples saw a man blind from birth, they asked Jesus if he was blind because he sinned or because of the sin of his parents. Jesus told them that neither sinned, but that he was blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. Then Jesus healed him. When others asked the formerly blind man what happened, he told them that Jesus healed him. So they took him to the Pharisees, and he explained what happened to them as well. Some of the Pharisees decided that Jesus couldn't be from God, because he healed on the Sabbath. They asked his parents who verified that he had indeed been born blind, but, being afraid of the Pharisees, they said they didn't know how he was healed. The Pharisees continued to badger the man and rebuked him when he claimed to believe in Jesus. So they drove him out. Jesus found him and reassured him that indeed he was the Son of Man. Then Jesus compared the man's physical blindness with the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees.

Session Goal:

To encourage students to recognize their areas of spiritual blindness and ask for Jesus' healing.

Session Objectives: Each youth will

- Play a game and draw a picture that will help illustrate how much we use sight
- Read John 9 out loud dramatically and then discuss the story
- Brainstorm and write on the board different ways Christians can be spiritually blind today
- Visit a prayer station and put on a blindfold as a way to reflect on his/her life

Materials Needed and Advance Preparation:

- Blindfolds for each person
- Balls, books, barriers for the FOCUS activity
- Papers, pencils, markers, paints
- Bibles
- 3-4 prayer stations, each equipped with a candle, pens and plenty of blindfolds

SESSION OUTLINE

Focus: (9 minutes)

After greeting the youth, invite them to play a game. Put on the floor in a specific order several books, a purse, and a couple other "barriers." Ask for a volunteer and blindfold him or her. Ask this person to go from one end of the room to a specific place (chair, table, or window). Count how many times he or she touches an object on the floor. Repeat the same process with 3-4 other youth. The person who touches the fewest objects "wins."

After that, suggest another game. Blindfold everyone and ask them to draw on paper. Without being able to see, they are to draw their favorite things. After everyone is done, let the youth take off their blindfolds and look at their creations.

Connect: (5 minutes)

Talk about the two games and the gift of sight. Ask them what they would miss the most if they were to become blind. Transition into the Bible story with this statement: *Jesus healed people who were physically blind. And he also used blindness as a way to teach a lesson. Let's look into John chapter 9 to see how Jesus used both kinds of blindness in one story.*

Bible Story: (20 minutes)

Set up John 9:1-41 as a dramatic reading. Ask one person to be the narrator, reading all the parts that are exposition (no one talking). Then get a reader for the blind man, a disciple, Jesus, three neighbors (one can read verse 8, one can read verse 9a and the third can read verse 9b), two Pharisees (one can read verses 16a, 19, 28-29, 34, 40 and the other one read verses 16b, 24, 26,) and one of the blind man's parents. You could copy pages from the Bible and highlight different parts with a marker.

Ask these questions:

Why was this man born blind?

How did Jesus heal him? Do you think the method is important?

What is so wrong about healing on the Sabbath? How important is it that Jesus healed on the Sabbath? Would the story still "work" if Jesus hadn't healed on the Sabbath?

Who were the Pharisees? Why were they upset about keeping the Sabbath? Did they have a valid point?

Who all in this story was afraid?

Who all in this story was blind?

At the end of the story, who received "new sight" in a spiritual sense? Who was blind to their own blindness at the end of the story?

Apply: (12 minutes)

Now turn the discussion to the present day. Ask the students to brainstorm all the ways that Christians today might be spiritually blind. Here are some possibilities:

We don't see miracles happening because we don't really believe in miracles.

We are more concerned about things staying the same way in our church traditions (like Sabbath) and so are blind to the work of the Spirit in new areas. (Be careful here to reiterate that some of our traditions are very good—but Jesus is Lord of everything in the church)

We can't see how Jesus is transforming another person because we have stereotypes of that person.

We aren't open to new ways of worshipping or new ways of serving others.

Ask the students to sit for a moment in silence, reflecting on this question: *In what way am I spiritually blind?*

Respond: (12 minutes)

After three minutes, direct the youth to several prayer stations you have created around the room. If they want, they can go to one of the stations and put on a blindfold as a way of repenting for their spiritual blindness. Then they can take the cloth used to cover their eyes and write down the new insight God has given them.

Insights from Scripture:

John 9 is a miracle story which tells us about the power of Jesus, his care and love for people, especially for people who are sick. However, this particular story does not state that only some people need healing and others don't. In this story, Jesus shows us that all humanity desperately needs the divine "Ophthalmologist." Jesus proclaims, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5). Without Him, all people are in darkness and are incapable of seeing the beauty of God and specifically who Jesus is. Jesus warns us to not follow the example of arrogant and prideful Pharisees who do not even notice they are blind. On the contrary, Jesus summons people to be humble in heart, wise, and meek in regarding God as the only source of true sight.

The passage tells us a story of a man who was born blind and then is healed by Jesus. Jesus himself is the initiator of the miracle. He fulfills all the expectations of the true Messiah such as "the blind receive

sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised” (Mt 11:5). Jesus makes the impossible possible—namely He makes a blind-born man to see. Unfortunately, nobody shares the joy of that man and Jesus. The neighbors express a great doubt and his parents are afraid of the religious leaders. Pharisees (Jewish men who were very diligently observing the Law or commandments from God) are blind to notice the very essence of Jesus’ miracle; instead, they accuse Him of violating the Sabbath. In particular, the Sabbath was the day during which God was resting (according to the Genesis story) and people were supposed to abstain from work for the entire day. The man that was healed now sees the real identity of Jesus who is the Son of God. In this miracle, Jesus touches not only the eyes of that man, but also his heart and makes him see God in Jesus. In comparison with a healed man, the Pharisees persist that they are healthy and have perfect sight. However, the eyes of their hearts have lost their entire ability to see. Jesus condemns the Pharisees for their obstinacy and blindness, and states that He came into the world to make people see the Truth.