
Small Group Discussion Guide

Text: John 9:13-41

Theme/ Big Idea: This text is a comparison and contrast between rejection and faith. The religious leaders descend into further rejection while the blind man grows in his faith and worship.

Context/ Background Information: In **John 9:1-7**, Jesus healed a man born blind from birth. When asked about his blindness by the disciples, Jesus said his blindness was so “that the works of God might be displayed in him” (**John 9:3**). In other words, his blindness, and subsequent healing, serve the divine purpose of displaying the works of God in Jesus. Jesus gave sight to a blind man who humbly trusted. The question of **John 9:1-12** is, “What will the religious leaders do?” They claim to see clearly but are blind. Will they humble themselves and trust Jesus and thereby finally see the light and experience the light of life? The remainder of **John 9** reveals the increasing rejection of the religious leaders versus the growing faith of the man born blind. First, we see the religious leaders persistently asking how the man was healed and increasingly rejecting the answer they receive. In contrast to their deepening rejection, we see that the blind man grows in his faith and worship. This comparison and contrast between rejection and faith leads to a final pronouncement by Jesus.

DEEPENING REJECTION

John 9 begins with the miraculous healing of a man born blind. The healing itself is covered in only two verses. The balance of the chapter, thirty-nine verses, draws attention to the growing rejection of the religious leaders. There are four discourses or interrogations in **John 9:8-41**: 1) The man and his acquaintances, which likely includes some religious leaders (**vs. 8-12**), 2) the man and the Pharisees (**vs. 13-17**), 3) the parents and the Pharisees (**vs. 18-23**), and 4) the man and the Pharisees a second time (**vs. 24-34**).

The question of how the man was healed is the overarching theme in all four interrogations (**John 9:10, 15, 19, 26**). While the disciples look for a reason for why the man is blind, the religious leaders look for a reason for why he sees. They are not simply asking a question of method but of ability and authority. How is it that this man Jesus, can heal a man born blind? And how is it that he has the authority to heal him on the Sabbath (**vs. 14**). Remember, the prevailing thought at this time was suffering and sin were directly related. So Jesus healing a suffering person and doing it on the Sabbath both testify to his authority over sin and the laws of man.

The answer to who Jesus is and how he can perform such a miracle with such authority should be obvious to all. It is obvious to the man (**John 9:30**). It is obvious to the reader. And it becomes even more obvious to the man in his final encounter with Jesus in **John 9:38**. The question that arises is why this is not obvious to the Pharisees? Or, more specifically, why they refuse to believe like the man does.

What **John 9** confirms, and what Jesus has already declared, is that these religious leaders are blind, they are of this world, they are ignorant of God, and they are sons of their father the devil (**c.f., John 8**). In other words, they are blind because the God of this world has blinded them from seeing the light of the gospel of Jesus (**2 Cor 4:4**). For this reason, Jesus can definitively call them “blind guides” (**Matt 23:16**). They believe their eyes more than they believe the true light, Jesus. They believe themselves more than they believe Jesus. They are displaying what it looks like to truly reject Jesus as savior. And in doing so, they are simply re-depicting **Genesis 2 and 3** all over again. Those who could see clearly, reject God and the light he provided, and the result was death. In **Genesis 2:16-17**, God invited Adam to trust and obey without full explanation. In **Genesis 3:6**, Adam and Eve believed the lies of Satan and their eyes rather than the clear truth of God. The result was all of creation being plunged into darkness and suffering.

INCREASING WORSHIP

In contrast to the deepening rejection of the religious leaders, **John 9** presents a man who moves from blindness to worship. When we first encounter the man, he could not see, yet he trusted Jesus unconditionally. He subsequently received sight and new life, and it leads to worship. This man and his faith stand in sharp contrast to the religious leaders who claim to see and yet reject Jesus. While they descend in their respect of Jesus, the man increases in his reverence and worship.

In **verse 11**, the man simply calls Jesus “the man.” In **verse 17**, he calls Jesus “a prophet.” In **verse 33**, he acknowledges that Jesus is “from God.” And by the conclusion of **chapter 9**, the man calls Jesus “Lord,” professes belief, and bows down in worship of Jesus. This is the only time in the Gospel of John that someone is said to worship Jesus. The word used for worship means to fall prostrate at someone’s feet in reverence. It can also mean to kiss someone’s feet. In either sense, the man is giving due reverence to Jesus as savior and king. There is a progression in the text with the man moving from blindness to sight, from awareness of Jesus to worship. His life and testimony are intended to be a witness to the religious leaders who move in exactly the opposite direction. They claim to see but are proving to be blind. They say they worship God but ultimately reject him by the end of the chapter. His life is also a testimony of what true faith looks like. It results in transformation and a growing love of Jesus and the things of God.

FINAL CONDEMNATION

Based on the expectations of the Old Testament, devout Jews and religious leaders expected specific miracles to be performed when the Messiah arrived. These included the deaf hearing the word of the Lord, the blind seeing, the lame leaping, the mute speaking, water pouring out like streams in a desert, and prisoners being set free from the bondage to darkness (**Is 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:7**). Each of these miracles is fulfilled in Jesus and, in many ways, is being fulfilled in the specific miracle of healing the blind man. Yet, the Pharisees persist in their rejection of Jesus. They reveal both their blindness and their condemnation repeatedly in their interrogations of the man and his parents. They confess that they do not know how the blind man regained his sight (**vs. 26**), and they do not know where Jesus comes from (**vs. 29**). The messenger and witness of the text sets the hook of condemnation, saying, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes” (**John 9:30**).

All of this leads to the final proclamation of Jesus, “For judgment, I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind” (**John 9:39**). This is an interesting statement given **John 3:17**, where we are told that “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn [judge] the world.” But as we read **John 3:18-19**, we realize that just as Jesus came to be the light of the world, he also simultaneously exposes darkness. One of the things he exposes and reveals are those who love darkness rather than light (**John 3:19**). This is a natural by-product of being the true light of the world. As the light of the world, Jesus saves, liberates, and redeems. Simultaneously, he also reveals that which is dark and in need of salvation, liberation, and redemption. This is why Jesus said, “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (**John 3:19**). In shining the light of life into the world, Jesus simultaneously reveals sin and blindness.

The Pharisees quickly retort, “Are we also blind?” (**John 3:40**). Jesus uses their words to support his point and reveal their blindness. He tells them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt” (**John 9:41a**). In other words, if they acknowledged they were blind, they would be on their way to seeing. If they would admit their weakness and their need for rescue, they would see and experience new life. Rather than admit weakness and thereby experience redemption, the religious leaders claim “we see.” This reveals that they are boasting in themselves and their own abilities and are indeed blind and stand condemned. This text powerfully communicates that those who boast in their own abilities, strength, and sight, actually do not see. On the other hand, those who admit their blindness and boast in Jesus as the light and life of the world will see (**Jer 9:23-25**). As it stands at the conclusion of **chapter 9**, the Pharisees persist in boasting in their own sight and their own strength, and the result is that they stand guilty and condemned. While on the other hand, the blind man humbly trusted Jesus, and it resulted in sight, light, and worship.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Isaiah 29:18, 35:5-6, 42:7. What Messianic expectations existed at the time of this miraculous healing in John 9? With that background and such an obvious miracle, how would you explain the Pharisee’s response?
2. Chapter nine provides a comparison and contrast between the blind man and the seeing religious leaders.
 1. What contrasts do you notice in the story?
 2. How does the man’s faith, reverence, and worship grow in the text?
 3. How does the Pharisee’s rejection increase in the text?
3. What will the Pharisees be left with if they continue to ignore the evidence and reject Jesus?
4. What do the parents fear, according to John 9:22? What happens to the man as a result of confession of faith in Jesus, according to John 9:34? What does this teach us about following Jesus? What does this teach us about the authenticity of the man’s faith? How does the man’s growth and persistence in faith visibly display the truth of John 8:31-32?
5. How does this story confirm that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God?