

# Pursue Those in Darkness (The Blind Man)

*March 13, 2022*



## PURSUE

BUILDING FOR PEOPLE. BELIEVING FOR MORE.

### Lesson Summary

#### ***Main Passages***

John 9:1-38

#### ***Session Outline***

1. The Mission of the Christ (John 9:1-12)
2. Self-Righteous Scoffers (John 9:13-34)
3. The Humble Repent and Believe (John 9:35-38)

---

#### ***Theological Theme***

Ultimately, Jesus's mission was to give God glory. God's glory shines brightly in both the blaze of His judgment and wonder of His mercy. Whether a person believes or not, they will glorify God, either in their joyous rescue or just condemnation.



## Leader Guide

# Man Born Blind

### Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever been given advice that you refused to heed?
- ❓ Did you later regret ignoring it? Why or why not?

George Armstrong Custer is known for one thing: the Battle of Little Bighorn. General Custer, with around 200 men under his command, attacked a Native American village. Almost every single person under his command and Custer himself, was killed. The battle was so one-sided that as Custer's troops dwindled, they began to shoot their own horses to use as fortification in order to take up a defensive position against the onslaught of Native American warriors.

Before the battle, Custer was warned by some of his scouts about the size of the village and the potential number of warriors they might face. Custer disregarded these warnings. He believed his well-trained soldiers and advanced weaponry could defeat a group of Native American warriors, even if they were larger in number than his own troops. As it turned out, there were many more warriors, and his army had no chance against them.

The Bible warns us in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall." General Custer was blinded by his pride. He was puffed up and refused to listen to sound counsel. It ended up costing his life as well as the lives of many other men. This is a helpful warning in all areas of life, but it is critical in the area of spiritual ability and need.

The Scriptures speak over and over against those who would look upon their own spiritual condition and ability and be content. Those who examine their own hearts and lives and come away believing they are good and righteous are self-deceived and in great peril. In our study today, we will see those who are self-righteous and those who recognize their spiritual need.

## Session Summary

All people on earth are in the same spiritual boat: Everyone is radically corrupted. Everyone is totally depraved. Everyone has a sinful nature and tends toward sin. No one has lived their lives in perfect accord with the law and standard of God. All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standard (Romans 3:23). There are none who are righteous. No one has the spiritual ability to save themselves or cleanse themselves of sin. There must be some sort of intervention from the outside. If a person is going to be made spiritually whole, then a rescue must take place. It is the same as if a person was dropped in the middle of the ocean and left. What can this person do? They can't swim to the nearest land, which is hundreds of miles away. They can't remain in the water indefinitely. They are headed toward a watery grave unless someone comes to their aid.

In the passage today, we see the Rescuer who came to earth to save sinners from an eternal grave. Yet, some refuse to believe they are in trouble while others cling to Christ as if their life depends upon it (and it does!).

### 1. The Mission of Christ (John 9:1-12)

The main theme of John 9 is Jesus's work and the way people respond to it. At the beginning of the chapter, we read a significant statement Jesus made about Himself and His mission. He said, "We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (vv. 4-5).



What do we learn about Jesus of Nazareth from this statement? What implications might there be for us as His followers?

Jesus was sent by God. He did not arrive on the scene apart from the will of God. Furthermore, the works He did were by the authority of God the Father. Jesus did the will of His Father. This dynamic may cause confusion or even lead to an unbiblical understanding of Jesus Christ if we aren't clear about the Trinity.

Christians hold to the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible expresses throughout that God is three persons, but one essence. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are the same in substance and equal in power and glory. This doctrine is often avoided because it seems too difficult or confusing. But a clear understanding of the Trinity is essential to the Christian faith.

Jesus claimed that He was “the light of the world.” What did He mean by this? It may be an allusion to the Festivals of Tabernacles. During this festival, Jerusalem was lit up at night most prominently during this celebration, which was taking place during this time (see John 10:22). It was common for Jewish religious teachers to use light as a metaphor to describe positive people and things. Jesus applied this metaphor to Himself. This was neither prideful nor presumptive. Had he been a mere man, it would have been laughable, but He is the sinless Son of God who truly is the light of the world. Jesus said, “I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me would not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).

 What insight do we gain from this section concerning difficulties and sufferings we must face?


### Who's to Blame?

John wanted his readers to focus on the blindness of the man described in the first five verses. The disciples, wrapped in Old Testament legalism (Exod. 34:7), concluded there were only two possible explanations for the blindness: either his parents had sinned or the man had sinned. The disciples saw neither the man nor his parents but an opportunity for theological discussion. They displayed no compassion, only curiosity.

This narrative begins with a question about sin. Jesus's disciples wanted to know who had sinned to cause the man to be born blind. Was it him or his parents? Jesus answered, “This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him” (v. 3) Some may recoil at the idea that a person would suffer so God might be glorified. How could God allow a person to go through that kind of pain to bring glory to Himself?

There are three key truths we must keep in mind to understand this man's suffering and our own trials. First, God doesn't owe it to anyone to give them a life free from struggle or pain. God is not obligated to bless, help, guide, or provide for any person on earth. Consider the ways you have broken God's laws and resisted His will. Yet, despite mankind's stiff-necked rebellion, God does shower blessing after blessing upon His creation. Even the man born blind could look back at his life and see the kindness and mercy of God in innumerable ways. This is true for every person on earth even though they also suffer and struggle in various ways.


Second, for those Christ, the sicknesses, disappointments, and even tragedies that they must endure are blessings in themselves because God uses them to accomplish His purposes in their lives. Romans 8:28 says, “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Finally, God is glorious, and it is good and right for His glory to be displayed in the lives of people, even if it is displayed through suffering.

 Application: What has been your typical perspective on suffering? How might God use the difficult things in your life for your good and His glory?


## 2. Self-Righteous Scoffers (John 9:13-34)

The Pharisees were well known in Jesus's day as experts in the law of Moses. They were seen as religious leaders and revered as men of God. The problem was that many of them were puffed up in their own eyes. They knew the law of Moses better than anyone and even added their own laws on top of those laws. All of this made them prideful and self-righteous. They loved the praise of man and they believed they enjoyed the favor of God.

When Jesus arrived on the scene, He took aim at their pride and self-righteousness. This, of course, didn't sit well with them. For this reason, they looked for ways to trap Him so that they might put Him to death. So, it isn't surprising that the testimony of the man born blind would infuriate them.

-  How did the Pharisees respond to the man's testimony? What are some ways people try to explain away the work of God today?

At first, they investigated him carefully because they felt sure that they would find some inconsistency in his story. The Pharisees couldn't believe Jesus really had the power to give sight to a man born blind. Only God could do something like that. They wouldn't accept the veracity of his claim. They even went so far as to call his parents in to try to verify whether he was truly born blind. All the evidence pointed to the truthfulness of the man's claim.


-  What argument did the Pharisees present to the man in verse 24? How does this show that even as the Pharisees sought God, they were missing Him?

The Pharisees argued that it wasn't possible that Jesus could have done this miracle because He was a sinner. Of course, Jesus was not a sinner, but they were convinced He was because He did not conform to their man-made laws and traditions.

The Pharisees saw themselves as righteous and Jesus a sinner when the exact opposite was true. This is the great danger and cancer of self-righteousness and pride. It blinds people to their own sin and need and prevents them from seeking out a cure. The Pharisees' good behavior had blinded them to their need. They were proud, satisfied, distracted, and spiritually blind. Jesus pointed His finger in the direction of the self-righteous time and again throughout His ministry. The religious


leaders and well-to-do in Israel showed themselves to be trusting in their own merits and heritage time and again. They believed themselves to be justified in God's sight and saw very little need to be repentant, humble, and desperate. They were comfortable and self-satisfied.

There is no hope of salvation for those who do not see their desperate spiritual condition. Those who believe themselves to be justified and deserving of God's kingdom because of their good works, religious devotion, and lineage will by no means enter God's kingdom. Rather, they will be condemned to an eternity under God's wrath in hell.


 Application: Where might you be self-righteous? How is this passage a warning for us as we recognize self-righteousness in our own lives?

### 3. The Humble Repent and Believe (John 9:35-38)

The man who was born blind was humble. Physical infirmities and trials have a way of helping people realize their neediness. The man born blind and the Pharisees were in the same sinking, sin-soaked boat. There was no difference between them in terms of their spiritual condition and inability to rescue themselves. Yet, they were totally different in their responses to Christ, the One who had come to rescue them. The Pharisees had convinced themselves that they weren't in the sinking boat. They had built a system of law-keeping that had totally blinded them to their desperate need. The only thing more dangerous than being in a sinking boat is to convince yourself that you aren't in one at all.


 What were the two responses given to Jesus in this passage? How do these give a model for how we are to respond to Jesus?

What an astounding contrast we have here between the man who was born blind and the Pharisees. Those who claimed to have the light were actually blind. The man who was physically blind and poor in spirit was given both physical sight and spiritual sight. The humble, blind sinner was the one who was rescued from sin and made righteous, while the self-righteous were left to wallow in their sin.

 How does this passage show us the importance of humility—both in coming to Christ and sharing Him with others?




The Lord opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (see Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34; 29:23; Matthew 23:12; Luke 1:52; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). The humble are poor in spirit. Though they have earthly possessions,

they don't cling to them. They are hungry for righteousness, and so desperate to be delivered from their sin that they would give everything to sit at the Lord's table and be accepted by Him. They long for new life and they joyfully and gratefully accept the invitation of Christ to be born again. Their hearts leap like a calf loosed from its stall upon receiving Christ, and they can hardly begin to believe the great kindness and mercy that has been shown to them. These spiritually hungry people turn all their affection and devotion toward God. What little they had before is gladly abandoned considering the blessing that is now before them.

-  Application: What evidence does your life give of humble faith and repentance? How can you know? How would those close to you answer for you?

## Conclusion

This passage provides a stark contrast between the self-righteous and the poor in spirit. The Scriptures are clear that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Only those who recognize their deep need of a Savior will come to Him. And all who come to Him in faith and repentance will never be turned away. Those (like the Pharisees) who rest in their own law-keeping will bear the punishment for their own sin.

-  How does today's study challenge your view of suffering? How might God be using current hardship to draw you closer to Him?
-  How should our common need for Jesus lead to unity in the church? Why is this often not the case?
-  Who might you have a gospel conversation with using this account of the man who was born blind? What steps will you take toward that this week?

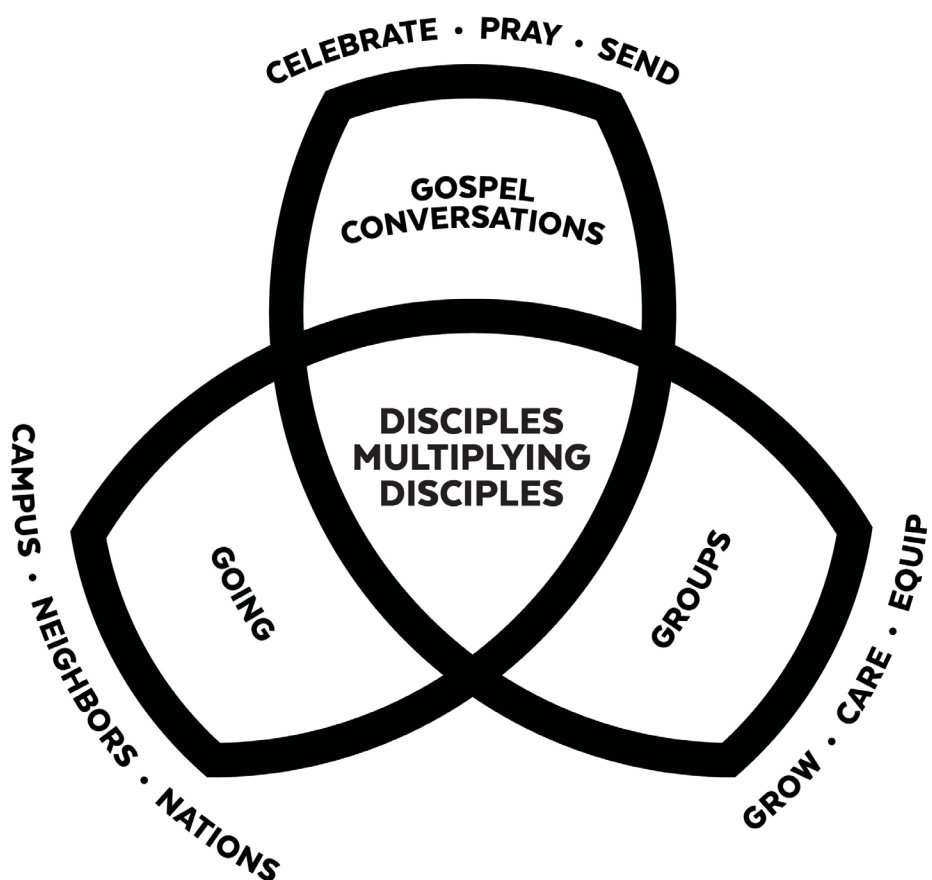
## Prayer of Response

*Give thanks to God the Father for sending His Son into the highways and hedges to call each of us to His banquet. Thank Him for calling us in our crippled, broken state and giving us a place at His table as beloved children. Ask Him to see ourselves rightly in light of His mercy and grace.*

## Additional Resources

- *The Gospel According to John* by D.A. Carson
- *John* by Richard Phillips
- *John 1-12 for You* by Josh Moody

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples



### DxD This Week

#### ***Group Emphasis***

Spiritual blindness can be discovered as we use our gifts in service. Allow people to share about their serving surfacing spiritual blindness or fears in their lives.



## For Next Week

### Session Title

- Pursue the Hurting (Lazarus)

### Main Passages

- John 11:1-27

### Session Outline

1. The Love of Jesus Christ (John 11:1-10)
2. The Wisdom of Jesus Christ (John 11:11-16)
3. The Power of Jesus Christ (John 11:17-27)

### Memorize

<sup>25</sup> *He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know.*

*One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!"*

- John 9:25

# Historical Context of John

## Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

## Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

## Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

## Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

## Extended Commentary

### John 9:1-38

9:1–41 Jesus’s identity as “the light of the world” was illustrated in his sixth and penultimate “sign” recorded in John’s Gospel—the healing of a man born blind (see note at 2:11). As in chap. 5, Jesus healed on the Sabbath and thus suffered persecution from the Jewish leaders. But in contrast to the lame man of chap. 5, who showed no faith and reported Jesus to the authorities, the formerly blind man showed a progression of faith and ended up worshipping Jesus (9:38). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness (vv. 40–41).

9:2 The disciples’ question reflected the assumption, customary in ancient Judaism, that suffering could be traced to specific sins (cp. Jb 4:7). The underlying concern of this assumption is to clear God of wrongdoing against innocent people (Ex 20:5; Nm 14:18; Dt 5:9). Yet the NT makes clear that suffering is not always a direct result of a person’s sin (Lk 13:2–3; 2Co 12:7; Gl 4:13). We should not speculate about the cause of a person’s suffering but realize that even evil can contribute to the greater glory of God (esp. the crucifixion; cp. Jn 12:28, 37–41; 17:1, 5).

9:3 Jesus did not explain why the man was born blind; he only announced what would be the result: God’s glory.

9:4 That Jesus included the disciples in his ministry by saying “We must do the works” is remarkable. Jesus realized that his time on earth was limited.

9:6–7 Jesus’s sending the man to wash in the pool of Siloam is reminiscent of Elisha’s sending Naaman to wash in the Jordan River (2Kg 5:10–13). The words which means “Sent” may echo the messianic reference in Gn 49:10 (cp. Is 8:6). After 9:7, Jesus is not heard from again until v. 35.

9:8–13 The man gave a clear testimony to all that he knew.

9:14 The mention of the Sabbath here (cp. 5:9) resumes the earlier Sabbath controversy in chap. 5. Jesus had moistened clay with his saliva and then kneaded it to make mud. Kneading dough, and by analogy kneading clay, was included among the thirty-nine classes of work forbidden on the Sabbath by Jewish rabbinic tradition (m. Shabb. 7:2).

9:15 Again the man gave his testimony, this time to the Pharisees.

9:16 The division among the Pharisees follows the differing ways of reasoning observed by the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The former argued from foundational principles (“anyone who breaks the law is a sinner”), the latter from the established facts of a case (“Jesus has performed a good work”).

9:18–22 The parents were evasive, pleading ignorance because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities who had decided to expel from the synagogue anyone who confessed Jesus as the Messiah.

9:24 The Pharisees' exhortation to the healed man, Give glory to God, was a solemn warning for him to tell the truth (Jos 7:19; 2Ch 30:8; Jr 13:16).

9:25–27 The man spoke boldly.

9:28 The Pharisees' claim of being Moses's disciples was undermined by their failure to listen to the one of whom Moses wrote.

9:29 The Pharisees' assertion, We know that God has spoken to Moses, harks back to God's giving Moses the law at Mount Sinai (Ex 33:11; Nm 12:2–8; cp. Jn 1:17).

9:30–33 The healed man's major premise, that God doesn't listen to sinners, is borne out by the OT (Ps 34:15; 66:20; 109:7; 145:19). His minor premise, that there was no precedent for opening the eyes of a person born blind, is also confirmed by the absence of such instances cited in OT or extrabiblical sources. The man's conclusion, If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything (cp. 3:2), fit with the common Jewish view that miracles were performed in answer to prayer.

9:34 The Pharisees' charge against the healed man may allude to Ps 51:5. Threw him out refers to expulsion from the synagogue (see v. 22). The way this was done suggests an impulsive action rather than excommunication based on a formal procedure.

9:35–38 Jesus the good shepherd sought out the man he had healed and led him to faith. The blind man progressed from identifying Jesus as "a prophet" (v. 17) to confessing him as Lord (v. 38).<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

## Author Bio

### **D.A. Carson (The Gospel According to John)**

D. A. Carson (PhD, University of Cambridge) is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, and is the author or editor of more than fifty books, including *The God Who Is There and How Long, O Lord?* He is one of the founders of The Gospel Coalition and an active guest lecturer in academic and church settings around the world.

### **Richard Phillips (John)**

Richard D. Phillips (MDiv, Westminster Theological Seminary; DD, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary) is the senior minister of Second Presbyterian Church of Greenville, South Carolina. He is a council member of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and of The Gospel Coalition, chairman of the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, and coeditor of the Reformed Expository Commentary series.

### **Josh Moody (John 1-12 for You)**

Josh Moody (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is the senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton. He is a pastor, author, conference speaker, and college campus speaker. He is the president and founder of God Centered Life Ministries. His books include *7 Days to Change Your Life* (Abingdon Press 2017), *How Church Can Change Your Life* (Christian Focus 2015), *Preaching to the Affections* (Christian Focus 2014), *Journey to Joy* (Crossway 2013), *Jonathan Edwards and Justification* (Crossway 2012), *No Other Gospel* (Crossway 2011), and *The God-Centered Life* (Regent 2007; IVP UK 2006).