

One truth shared: Jesus offers spiritual sight.

His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

John 9:2,3

Sight

Why did God allow that tragedy happen? Why did that natural disaster strike? Why did he get sick? Why did she break up with me? Why did that car accident happen? Why, God? When hard things happen, it's easy to wonder “why”? In John 9, the disciples thought they had an answer to such questions when they met a man who had been born blind. “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

It's a logical line of thought. Was this man's blindness a punishment for something he had done? Something his parents had done? What about today? Maybe this hard thing I'm facing is God punishing me! If I'm honest, I have to admit that I've been treated far better than I rightly deserve! Or, when life is going smoothly, maybe a related question arises: Lots of people have hardships, when is my turn coming? Surely I deserve it!

Such thinking seems to make sense, but the Bible calls such thinking spiritual blindness. It misses a critical point: God doesn't interact with his people that way. Why not? One word: Jesus! Jesus already took care of all the punishment there is for sin! He already took on his back the entirety of God's wrath. He paid for the smallest sins of thought that fly across the mind and that major transgression from years ago that you just can't seem to get out of your head and everything in between!

That beautiful reality doesn't necessarily answer the question “why” when it comes to hardships, but it does grant a change of perspective in a very important way: Hardship is indeed hard, but it's not punishment for sin! That's spiritual sight, and it's based on Jesus all the way. When Jesus died he said, “It is finished,” and it was. Because of that, hard things have a blessing-filled place in the beautiful purposes God has drawn up for his world and for your life. That was the case for the blind man. Jesus told his disciples, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” Jesus went on to heal the man and taught all who were watching an important lesson.

The same thing is true for you. God's purposes might be realized in quiet words of encouragement offered to someone suffering something similar, calm confidence in the Savior's promises amidst most challenging of times, or patient endurance under persecution. That's spiritual sight! Look at the promises of God, and you'll find the strength to accept even things that remain hard to understand!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, sometimes life and the world are hard, confusing, and painful. Sometimes it's hard for me to see what your plan is. Help me overcome my spiritual blindness by fixing my attention on your precious promises. Grant me the calm of quiet trust in your forgiveness, and the perspective of looking at life through your promises. Teach me to rely on your promises and accept even those things I struggle to understand. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year A – Lent 4

Our Greatest Needs

One truth shared: Jesus offers spiritual sight.

Sight

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- Imagine you had been born blind and never knew what sight looked like (*see if they get the pun*). The man in John 9 was born blind. What are some false/different conclusions you might draw about the world you live in? (*Identifying people [no concept of skin tones, hair color, and many other physical features!], sun as a source of heat rather than light, etc.*)
- *Point:* being deprived of sight affects the way you perceive the world and the conclusions you draw about how the world works.

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- Now take that same line of thinking and apply it to spiritual life. A major focus of John 9 is Jesus' goal of showing the Pharisees their own spiritual blindness. Imagine perceiving the world (both physically and spiritually) with the blindness of unbelief. What kinds of false/different conclusions you might draw about the world you live in? (*The world is a harsh and nasty place, the strong and cruel win more often than not, things are not as they should be, God's people don't always seem to have the outward advantage one might expect, etc.*)
- *Point:* Being deprived of spiritual sight makes it impossible to see God and understand his plans.

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Think about the Pharisees in John 9.
 - In what ways were they spiritually blind? (*They were more concerned about petty laws than love, they refused to recognize Jesus for who he is.*)
 - Do you think they realized that they were spiritually blind? (*It doesn't seem they did—in fact Jesus' whole goal in this chapter is to show them that they are spiritually blind!*)
- Explain Jesus' cryptic statement in v. 41. Why is Jesus saying the Pharisees (religious leaders of the day!) remain in their guilt? (*They think they don't need a Savior for sin—they've got that covered by their obedience to the laws. Admitting that you're blind [and need a Savior] is far better than pretending that you can see [don't need a Savior] when you actually can't.*)
- What does spiritual blindness look like today? What factors or attitudes might prevent a person from even realizing their blindness? (*People are blinded by reason and logic, by allegiance to human thinking, by the*

influence of other people and society, by not realizing that perfect means perfect, etc.)

- As a Christian, you have spiritual sight. Describe an experience where you or a Christian you know has benefited from the increased understanding offered by spiritual sight. *(Answers will vary. Times of hardship are often times when spiritual blindness and sight are easier to observe because the perspective change offered by a relationship with Jesus.)*

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

Imagine you have the chance to talk to a person trapped in spiritual blindness who is facing something hard and is filled with questions. Describe some key ideas that you would share with them to help them gain spiritual sight. *(Great Exchange outline is a valuable template here—God’s expectations vs. people’s behavior, the insufficiency of human efforts, the beauty of God’s solution in Christ who takes our place and lives and dies for us.)*