



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

20/20 Blindness

Hit Reset, John 9:1-41

Cisco Cotto | June 14, 2020



I want to show you one of my favorite things. In fact, I love it so much, I use it just about every single morning. I love it for a variety of reasons. I love it because of the bright colors. Look at that green—it just pops, doesn't it? I love this because it's deep. I can fit a lot of stuff in here. I love it because it's sturdy. You'd have to try to break this thing. And the writing on it reminds me of some of my favorite people. So that's why I love it too. It reminds me of some really great folks. What do you think of it? Do you like this? Is it beautiful? Do you have one? Do you wish you had one?

Now, you're probably thinking that we are having technical difficulties right now, because you can't see anything on your screen. I hope you haven't refreshed your browser, thinking that it was an internet problem. No, this is intentional. I want you to imagine what this scenario would be like. You're worshiping with us, listening to me talk, but you can't see anything because you're blind. Would it be challenging? Would it be frustrating? It was probably a little frustrating just in the few seconds we have been doing this.

Let's bring it back now on video. This is what I was talking about here: my Village Bible Church coffee mug. Do you see that beautiful green? I don't know who picked that out, but they did a really great job. I use this for my coffee just about every morning. If you don't have one of these and you're new to our church, when we open again in a couple weeks, stop by a welcome center. We want to give you one of these and say hello to you. Again, I love that. I use it just about every day.

The reason why we did that is to show the frustration that comes from being blind. You know you can't see. You wish you could see. You know that somehow something just isn't right, so that frustration begins to set in. You try to fix it. You want to do whatever is necessary to get things back to the way they should be. That's because you know that there's a blindness going on. You know that something's not quite right. You're not seeing the picture you're supposed to see. But what happens if you're blind—and you don't know it? What happens if you think you can see, but you're actually not able to?

In John 9, we read about the story of a man who was born blind. He was never able to see. This man never saw a sunrise or a sunset. He never saw his parents' faces. He never saw anything. Now, that must have been frustrating and discouraging for him. That was certainly a challenge for him. What this story shows us in John 9 is not only was the man physically blind, but there was another problem he needed help with as well. It's the same thing you and I needed help with.

1. There is more than one blind person who needs healing.

You see, this man was born into blindness, but he was not the only one in John 9 who was blind. There were lots of people in this story who were blind. We hear this story, and we're told about the healing of a man born blind, but there are lots of people who need healing from their blindness. The challenge is they don't even know they are blind. In fact, there are four groups of people in this story who are blind and in need of healing.

We're going to play a video for you. Watch and see if you can find the first two groups of blind people who need God to step in.

Video: As Jesus was walking along, He saw a man who had been born blind. "Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents' sin?"

"His blindness has nothing to do with his sin nor his parents' sin. He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him. As long as it is day, we must keep on doing the work of Him Who sent Me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

After He said this, Jesus spat on the ground and made some mud with the spittle. He rubbed the mud on the man's eyes. "Go wash your face in the Pool of Siloam." This name means "sent." So the man went and washed his face and came back seeing.

His neighbors then, and the people who had seen him begging before this, asked, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

"He's the one." "No, he just looks like him."

"I am the man."

"How is it that you can now see?"

"The man called Jesus made some mud and rubbed it on my eyes and told me to go to Siloam and wash my face. So I went, and as soon as I washed, I could see!"

"Where is He?"

"I don't know."¹

The disciples are blind (John 9:1-5).

We mentioned there is more than one blind person who needs healing and in that video you saw two groups of people who are in need of healing because they are blind. The first group is the disciples. They walk up to Jesus, Who is looking at a blind man, getting ready to interact with him, and they ask Him a question that is actually in Jesus' day a pretty legitimate question. "Who sinned? Why is this man blind? Was it his sin or his parents' sin? What went on here, Jesus?"

They were reflecting a belief that was very common in the first century. If you had some kind of a physical challenge or disability, they thought it was a direct result of either your sin or the sin of your parents. There was even a belief that a child in the womb could sin and that could lead them to be born blind.

Now, Jesus corrects this faulty interpretation by turning it on its head. In fact, He tells them, "It's not his sin. It's not his parents' sin. It's not sin at all." We read in John 9:3, "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" This man had lived decades without being able to see so that Jesus could do something amazing in him that people are still talking about 2,000 years later. We'll talk more about this in a moment, but I want to point out that the disciples are among the people who are blind.

The blind man's neighbors are blind (John 9:8-12).

The neighbors of the blind man saw this man grow up. They know he's been blind from birth. They see him walking around, eyes wide open, able to make eye contact with them for the very first time and they do not believe it. They don't understand.

We need to give them some grace for this. I don't know if you or I would understand it either, if we saw a person we knew was blind who is now able to see. What they need is for Jesus to do a miracle in their lives so they are no longer blind, so they can see what God wants them to see.

We have the disciples who are blind, the blind man's neighbors who are blind, but there are two more groups of people who are also blind. Watch this video and see if you can pick them out.

Video: Then they took to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. The day that Jesus made the mud and cured him of his blindness was a Sabbath. The Pharisees then asked the man again how he had received his sight. "He put some mud on my eyes. I washed my face and now I can see."

"The man who did this cannot be from God, for he does not obey the Sabbath law." "How could a man who is a sinner perform such miracles as these?" There was division among them. "You say He cured you of your blindness. What do you say about Him?"

"He is a prophet!"

The Jewish authorities, however, were not willing to believe that he had been blind and could now see, until they called his parents. "Is this your son? You say that he was born blind. How is it then that he can now see?"

"We know that he is our son. We know that he was born blind, but we don't know how it is that he is now able to see, nor do we know who cured him of his blindness. Ask him. He is old enough and can answer for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, who had already agreed that anyone who said he believed that Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. That is why his parents said, "He is old enough; ask him."

A second time they called back the man who had been born blind. "Promise before God that you will tell the truth. We know that this man who cured you is a sinner."

¹ <https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch.html>

"I do not know if He's a sinner or not. One thing I do know: I was blind and now I see."

"What did He do to you? How did He cure you of your blindness?"

"I have already told you and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Maybe you too would like to be His disciples."

They insulted him and said, "You are that fellow's disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses. As for that fellow, however, we do not even know where He comes from."

"What a strange thing that is. You do not know where He comes from, but He cured me of my blindness. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but He does listen to people who respect Him and do what He wants them to do. Since the beginning of the world nobody has ever heard of anyone giving sight to a person born blind. Unless this Man came from God, He would not be able to do this thing!"

"You were born and brought up in sin, and you are trying to teach us?" Then they expelled him from the synagogue.

When Jesus heard what had happened, He found the man. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Tell me Who He is, Sir, so that I can believe in Him."

"You have already seen Him. He is the One Who is talking with you now."

"I believe, Lord." And he knelt down before Jesus.

"I came to this world to judge, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind."

Some Pharisees who were there with Him heard Him say this and asked Him, "Surely you don't mean that we are blind too?"

"If you were blind, then you would not be guilty. But since you claim that you can see, this means that you are still guilty."²

The Pharisees (or Jews) are blind (John 9:13-19).

We already saw that the disciples are blind and the blind man's neighbors are blind, but we also now know that the Pharisees are blind. They're called Pharisees, they're called Jews—these are the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day. They see what has happened—that a man who was blind can now see—and all they can think about is it must be some sort of a joke. It must be a ruse, a hoax. There's no way this man could actually be healed of his blindness. They get angry about Jesus. They accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath. There's fighting among these Jewish leaders. They know the Old Testament Scriptures better than anyone, yet they can't recognize that Jesus is the Savior Who was predicted long ago. This is because the Pharisees are blind.

The parents are blind (John 9:20-21).

Also the blind man's parents are blind. Just like with his neighbors, I think we need to give these folks a little grace. They had a weighty decision to make as they were called in front of the Jewish leaders and asked, "Was he really born blind? Has he really been healed?" The reason is because they knew word had gotten out that the Jewish leaders had said, "Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is Who He says He is will be kicked out of the synagogue. You won't be able to come back anymore."

That's a huge punishment, because in the first century, if you were kicked out of the synagogue, you were kicked out of your religious life and removed from your cultural life. You'd be ostracized. No more friends, no more family, your way of making a living may have been interrupted. To say that you would be cut off from the synagogue was a huge punishment.

The man's parents are afraid and that's why they say, "He's of age; let him decide." We see near the end of John 9, as the blind man is arguing back and forth with the Pharisees about what Jesus has done, it actually says in verse 34 that the Pharisees cast him out. They kicked the blind man out of the synagogue. His parents were right to be concerned.

2. The blind man is healed twice.

There's more than one person who is blind and in need of healing, but we have four groups of people—the disciples, the neighbors, the Pharisees (also known as the Jews, the leaders of the people) and the blind man's parents—all of them were blind, but not physically. How are they blind? How is Jesus going to reveal this to us so we understand their blindness? He does this by healing the blind man twice.

² <https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch.html>

The blind man is healed of physical blindness.

As I mentioned earlier, this story is often called the story of Jesus healing the man born blind. Maybe it should be Jesus healing the man born blind twice, because that's what Jesus does here. Certainly He heals him of physical blindness. We've already seen that in the videos. Jesus reaches down into the dirt, takes some of His saliva, makes mud, puts it on the man's eyes, then tells him to wash—and he is able to see. The man's physical blindness is healed.

You may be wondering, "Why did Jesus do it this way? Why does He use saliva? Why does He make mud? Why does He put it on the man's eyes?" I've studied this for years, having read what the scholars and all the Bible commentaries say, and I've cobbled them together. You know, there is an agreement on why Jesus takes saliva, puts it in the dirt, makes mud and puts it on the man's eyes.

Do you know what that consensus is? We don't know. It's just the truth. We don't know why Jesus healed the man in this way. There are some theories and they're pretty interesting. Saliva in the first century was seen to have healing qualities—almost like a medicine. Some think that's why Jesus healed him in this way.

Others believe Jesus dug down into the dirt, because that action would have been considered working on the Sabbath. Jesus would have known that act would have gotten the religious leaders riled up. It would really have gotten their attention. There are others—and this is where I fall—who see this as symbolic, designed to paint a picture of a truth we get from earlier in the Bible, right at the beginning of the book of Genesis.

You see, the Gospel of John is filled with symbols, imagery and word pictures. Jesus is known as the Word. He says things like, "I am the bread of life. I am the gate of the sheep." This is throughout the book of John. There's light and darkness, and Jesus is always the light. Some scholars believe John is trying to make us think back to the beginning when God reaches down into the dirt and creates humanity. The picture would be the same God Who creates out of dirt is now healing with some dirt. I don't know whether that's it or not, but it seems to make sense to me.

Whatever the reason Jesus did it in this way, what we know is the man was healed of his physical blindness, but that's not the end of the story. He wasn't just healed for healing's sake. As we've already seen, Jesus said, "God's works are going to be seen through this man." That's accomplished not just with the physical healing, but also with spiritual healing.

The blind man is healed of spiritual blindness.

The blind man is healed physically, but he is also healed spiritually. He was facing spiritual blindness. What do I mean by "spiritual blindness"? The man is unable to see God as He really is. The man is unable to see God's ways and have a clear understanding. This spiritual blindness means someone is completely incapable of following God properly, because they don't have a clear understanding of Who He is and what He demands of His people.

If your eyes are not working properly, you have physical blindness. If your heart, your soul, is in any way blocked, it is also blind. That is spiritual blindness. We don't understand Who God is or what He does or what He wants us to do. This man is healed of his spiritual blindness in addition to his physical blindness.

It's interesting to me, though, that both the physical blindness and the spiritual blindness could have been healed at the same time. Jesus could have done it in an instant. Instead, as we've already discussed, He takes the saliva, makes the mud, puts it on the man's eyes and makes him go to the pool and wash. It's a process.

The healing of his spiritual blindness happens in stages.

The process of the man being healed of his spiritual blindness is also one that happens in several stages—in fact, four stages. Open your Bible again to see the process.

1. The blind man sees Jesus as just a name. In John 9:11, we see where the man knows Jesus only as a name—basically as some guy. He doesn't have a grasp on Who Jesus really is. This is what he says in verse 11: "*The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.'*" "*This man named Jesus.*" He's basically saying, "This dude came up, put mud on my eyes, I washed and I was healed." He doesn't understand Who Jesus is.

2. The blind man sees Jesus as a prophet. Fast forward. The man is having conversations with the Pharisees who do not believe he is really healed. They ask him, "Who is this man who healed you?" In verse 17, they ask the blind man, "*What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?*" He says, "*He is a prophet.*"

The man sees Jesus as a prophet—moving from just a name to a prophet. A prophet is someone called by God to take His word to people, to share His message. So we're seeing a progression here. He moves from just "Jesus" —just this guy—to now a prophet. The man is

beginning to understand, "Clearly God is involved here, so this man who healed me must be one of His messengers." His spiritual blindness, slowly but surely, is being lifted, so he gets an even clearer picture of Who Jesus is.

3. The blind man sees Jesus as clearly from God. Look at John 9:30 now. Here we're going to see that the blind man begins to see Jesus as clearly from God. Clearly this man was sent by God to achieve His purposes. He's no agent of the devil. He's no one trying to cause problems in the world. No way! This is someone clearly from God.

Again, the blind man is going back and forth with the Pharisees here, arguing back and forth. They don't believe he was healed. They don't believe Jesus is capable of doing this. Verses 30-34 say the man answers the Pharisees and he's now going to get logical with them. It's starting to make a lot of sense that Jesus is someone Who must be from God.

³⁰ "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

4. The blind man sees Jesus as the Lord, worthy of worship. We're seeing how his spiritual blindness is slowly but surely being taken away. Jesus goes from just a name to a prophet to someone who is clearly from God. And finally, the blind man sees that Jesus is Lord and worthy of worship. He is the Lord and deserves to be praised. We should bow to Him—and that's just what the blind man does.

Look at verses 35-38. The blind man has been cast out of the temple. He's gone from the synagogue. He's been moved out of Jewish life. Jesus hears about this and tracks the blind man down. Remember, the blind man has still not laid eyes on Jesus. Jesus puts the mud on his eyes and sends him to wash, then Jesus takes off. The man has never actually laid eyes on Jesus.

So Jesus goes to find him after he is cast out of Jewish life, saying to the man, "*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*" The blind man answers, "*And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?*" Jesus says to him, "*You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.*" He said, "*Lord, I believe,*" and he worshiped him.

3. We need God to heal our spiritual blindness.

The Gospel of John is all about helping people believe that Jesus is Who He says He is, that Jesus is the One we can trust, that Jesus is God Himself Who came to earth to save people from their sins, so they can be with Him forever. This sign, this miracle, in the Gospel of John is about God showing not only the blind man, but also each of us, that we all need healing from spiritual blindness.

This man's physical eyes were fixed to show us that we need our spiritual eyes fixed in the depths of our souls. Every single one of us needs this healing. Every single one of us deals with spiritual blindness. It's not just this man. We need God to heal our spiritual blindness.

Our physical challenges may never be healed.

What we're hoping for is that our physical healing comes, that our physical challenges will be taken away, just like Jesus did for this blind man. Unfortunately, I can't tell you that's going to happen. Our physical challenges may not be healed. Keep in mind in Jesus' day, there were lots of other blind people, there were lots of people who couldn't walk or hear—and not all of them were healed. Only some of them. In this case, it's so that God's works can be shown through this man.

Our spiritual blindness can be healed.

Jesus heals his physical blindness to show that we all need healing from spiritual blindness. All of our physical challenges are not going to be taken away, but our spiritual blindness can be healed. What does it look like to have spiritual blindness healed? Earlier I told you spiritual blindness is not being able to see God properly, not being able to understand His ways, Who He is and what He has done.

In our souls—the Bible calls it our hearts—we are blind. We cannot see things as they really are. So what we need is for God to unveil the eyes of our hearts, allowing us to see and taking away that spiritual blindness. This happens in people who have not yet followed Jesus when they begin following Him. If you're not someone who follows Jesus, listen to me on this. This is vital. Spiritual blindness in your life can be taken away by simply acknowledging what the Bible tells us: the good news. Even though every single one of us is a sinner who rebels against God—going our own way, living life in our own wisdom, making our own choices—God offers forgiveness and a relationship with Himself.

All we have to do is acknowledge, "I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I know Jesus is that Savior. He died on the cross and rose from the dead." Acknowledge that, own your sin and allow God to forgive it. You will be forgiven and you will be in God's Kingdom. You will be with Him forever and ever. Your relationship with Jesus begins right now.

If that's the sort of spiritual blindness you want to get rid of, just text Jesus to 630-283-7600 and someone will get in touch with you to talk with you about Jesus and answer your questions. We want that spiritual blindness to be gone. We want you to know Jesus Christ.

After we become Christians, it doesn't mean the blindness is totally gone. There's still sin in our lives. There are still these little rebels at work. We still think we're smarter than God. We still think we can be wiser than God, so we make a lot of our own decisions. Spiritual blindness in that sort of a person takes intentionality if it's ever going to be gotten rid of; if it's ever going to be healed.

What I'm going to encourage you to do is hard, but it is necessary. I think this is one of the most challenging things about the Christian life. If you want to be a follower of Jesus who gets rid of that spiritual blindness and is wholeheartedly serving the Lord, here's what you have to do. You have to humbly come before God in prayer, asking Him to search deep in your soul to root out the hidden sins, to find the things you're blinded to, the sin that's there and you aren't even aware of it. It takes humility for us to come to God acknowledging we have a need.

That's one of the things Jesus tells the religious leaders in John 9. When He explains in more detail exactly why He came and why He healed this blind man of his physical blindness, Jesus tells all the people around Him in John 9:39-41:

"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

What is Jesus saying to them? He's saying, "The only people who get rid of spiritual blindness, the only people in whom God performs that miracle, are the people who are humbly willing to acknowledge before God that they are blind and need to see."

At the beginning of this message when I was talking about my coffee cup, I said the reason why it's so frustrating is because we know that something was wrong with the screen. We know we're not seeing what we're supposed to see. But the issue with spiritual blindness, as opposed to physical blindness, is it's there and we don't know it. We think we can see just fine, but we can't. Jesus wants to take people who can see and make them blind, humble, acknowledging they need His help.

What does this look like in prayer? We come before God and say, "Lord, I need You to open the eyes of my heart, to unveil what's blinded, so that I can see the hidden sin in my life, the sin I don't even know is there." Then God the Holy Spirit will act on that prayer. It's a hard prayer. It's a dangerous prayer. Get ready when you do it. We all need to do this. I encourage you to do this.

I've been doing it, especially over the last several weeks. It's a hard and dangerous prayer, but God uses to take away the blindness. One of the things I've been praying about over the last couple of weeks, as there's been civil unrest in our country, is that I've been asking the Lord, "Show me if I have any sort of racism in my heart."

I don't think I do because I am biracial. My dad was from Puerto Rico, with very dark skin. I have biracial members in my family. You look at my family and my extended family and my in-laws when we all get together at Thanksgiving, you'd think it is a United Nations meeting. So I don't think I have any racism in me, but the more I've been asking God to get rid of my spiritual blindness and show me what's really going on inside, there are things I'm ashamed of. But I praise God for being good and showing what's really going on in here.

We can be blind to even soft racism in our hearts. We can be blind to the impact of our gossip. "Oh, I just talk about that person behind their back. It's just a little fun. It doesn't hurt them. They don't know what I'm saying." It's blindness that allows us to continue that.

Think of the lust that goes on up here. We fool ourselves because we are blinded. We say, "Well, as long as I don't touch that person, it's okay." It's not. That's blindness.

You students who are struggling to get ahead, trying to get good grades so you can get a scholarship or get into the college of your choice. It's so easy to cheat, especially in a school-at-home world. Ask God, "Is there blindness? Am I doing something that is sinful, that is opposite to the way You have called Your people to live? If so, Lord, show me. I want to live in a way that honors You."

That's my prayer for each of us, brothers and sisters, that we would have a clear understanding what John 9 is all about. Jesus takes away his physical blindness to show us we all need our spiritual blindness taken away. It is hard. It is risky. It is painful when God gets to work on your heart.

Think about someone taking off sunglasses in the bright sun. It hurts at first, right? That's exactly what happens when the blindness of your heart is taken away. When the light comes in, it is hard. But it's the only way we can truly experience freedom. It's the only way we can truly see things as they are.