

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Week 5: John 9 - Jesus: Healer

### CONTEXT

**A quick look back:** Spend a few minutes reviewing the big picture of John from previous weeks. What kind of literature is the gospel of John? Who wrote it? What is the book's main purpose? How is the book organized? Where are we in the large story of Scripture? What do you remember from Chapter 1? What did we learn from the Samaritan woman about God's invitation to the outsider?

**Today's Passage:** One of John's primary goals in his gospel is to *show* that Jesus is God, often through signs and miracles like the healing in today's passage. Similar to the Samaritan woman at the well last week, today we meet another unlikely disciple- a blind, uneducated, no name beggar who becomes a witness for Jesus. John loves to play with opposites in his gospel- especially the idea of light/darkness or sight/blindness- which we will see in this story. Interestingly, today's passage follows Jesus' declaration in Chapter 8: "I am the light of the world." This story asks us to determine who actually *sees* and *understands* this light, and who is *blind* to it.

### CONTENT:

Read John 9 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

**Option A. Notice/Wonder:** Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text? What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group and share your observations, writing them on a board or a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

**Option B. Creative Engagement:** Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together and spend time sharing with each other what you drew and why.

**Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:**

1. How do the disciples view the relationship between suffering/sickness and sin? What is Jesus' view of this issue? (vs 1-3).
2. Jesus has two encounters with the blind man (vs 6, then vs 35-38). Who initiates these encounters? Does the blind man have any role in his healing?

3. Look at the details of the man's healing (which he repeats LOTS of times in these verses). How does Jesus choose to heal him? Why do you think Jesus heals in this way?
4. The passage describes the reactions of lots of bystanders. Discuss how each group responds: neighbors (vs 8-12), Pharisees (vs 13-17), parents (vs 18-23).
5. The Pharisees reject Jesus because "they do not know where he came from" (vs 29). How does John pre-answer this question in John 1: 14?
6. The blind man makes 4 statements about Jesus in this story (vs 11, 17, 33, 38). What do you notice about the progression of his statements? How is Jesus becoming "clearer" to him as the story progresses. How does this contrast with the other characters in the story?

## APPLICATION:

***How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion.***

- Many characters in this story want to connect suffering and disease with sin, but Jesus clearly rejects this connection. Have you ever encountered this connection in conversations or faith settings? Have you ever experienced hurt because others have assumed this connection in your life or the life of someone you love?
- One of the tensions in Scripture and in our own lives is that we have a God who can heal, but who sometimes heals in ways we hope for and sometimes does not. And yet we cling to the truth that God is somehow lovingly in the midst of both scenarios.
  - Have you ever experienced healing in your life or in the life of someone close to you? How did you sense God in that experience?
  - Have you ever experienced a longing for healing that did not come? How did you sense God in that difficult place?
- What does it mean for you to encounter a God in this story who seeks us even when we are not seeking him?
- The problem in this story doesn't seem to be blindness. The problem is those who don't *admit* that they are blind- who don't see the need for the loving touch of Jesus in their lives.
  - What are practices that might help us name our blindness?
  - How does the intimacy in this story (the spit, the dirt, the touching of the face) sit with you? What does it teach you about how God interacts with us in our blindness?

## PRAYER:

***Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below.***

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your "wonderings" from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

*Holy God,  
 We confess that so often, we fail to question our own  
 sightlessness.  
 Being so sure that we "see,"  
 we miss the truths you would teach us.  
 With the touch of your love, cure this blindness.  
 Open our eyes to our own misunderstandings,  
 our own failures and our own faults.  
 May our blindness be overcome with the light of your  
 grace.  
 And may that light lead us to worship you, the Light of  
 the World.  
 We pray this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ-  
 Amen*

