



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 9:8-38*

<sup>8</sup> His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit begging?” <sup>9</sup> Some said, “He’s the one.” Others were saying, “No, but he looks like him.” He kept saying, “I’m the one.” <sup>10</sup> So they asked him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” <sup>11</sup> He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So when I went and washed I received my sight.” <sup>12</sup> “Where is he?” they asked. “I don’t know,” he said.

<sup>13</sup> They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” he told them. “I washed and I can see.” <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he doesn’t keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” ... <sup>17</sup> Again they asked the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?” “He’s a prophet,” he said. <sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight. <sup>19</sup> They asked them, “Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” <sup>20</sup> “We know this is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents answered. <sup>21</sup> “But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he’s of age. He will speak for himself.” <sup>22</sup> His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> This is why his parents said, “He’s of age; ask him.”

<sup>24</sup> So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” <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!" <sup>26</sup> Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> "I already told you," he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?" <sup>28</sup> They ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses's disciples. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don't know where he's from." <sup>30</sup> "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. <sup>32</sup> Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." <sup>34</sup> "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. <sup>37</sup> Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup> "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him.

## 1. The Narrative

### a. Interrogated by neighbours – 9:8-12

- a. First opportunity to tell his story, not his initiative
- b. Not clear about who Jesus was (a man called Jesus) – had not yet seen him
  - "In Jesus' absence, the man takes center stage...He becomes Jesus' spokesman in...the contention between Jesus & the sign of his healing...He is the proof that a sign did occur...As the scene unfolds, the formerly-blind man [is] in reactionary mode. He does not voluntarily proclaim Jesus. Rather people pepper him with questions & he responds with short answers...He acknowledges his limited knowledge...'I don't know.'... Ignorant of Jesus' whereabouts...he may feel...abandoned & inadequate." [Gilbert S. Hoo, *From Faith to Faith: Blindman's Bluff*, pp. 72-73]

### b. Interrogated by Pharisees – 9:13-17

- a. First how he received sight.
- b. Then what do you say about him (who is he)
- c. Man responds – He's a prophet

### c. Parents questioned – 9:18-23

- a. Due to unbelief of Pharisees
- b. Confirm he was born blind; don't know how he received sight
- c. Defer to their son due to fear

### d. Further interrogation by Pharisees– 9:24-29

- a. "Give glory to God" – tell the truth because you are lying
- b. "This man is a sinner."
  - a. They intentionally don't want to believe Jesus is the Messiah.
  - b. Probably know the OT messianic activity Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7
  - c. *Isa 29:18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.*

### e. The man's long speech – 9:30-33

- "Jesus disappears after he sends the blind man to the pool...We do not know where he goes...[or] why. This portion... is the *longest section in the 4th Gospel in which Jesus is not present*...We feel that Jesus abandons the man to face his interrogators alone. We think it is unfair...Jesus heals [him] on the Sabbath...Jesus appears to be intentional in placing the now-seeing-man in his precarious position so that *alone he will face the displeasure of the religious establishment* for being party to a perceived Sabbath violation (9:14, 16). ... *The man is 'set up.'* He is an unwitting victim of Jesus' agenda... *What*

*purpose does [Jesus'] uncharacteristic absence serve?" [Gilbert S. Hoo, *From Faith to Faith: Blindman's Bluff*, pp. 73-74]*

- a. Jesus has disappeared and left the man on his own.
- b. Man repeats the facts of gaining his sight
- c. He taunts them
  - a. I told you already – you won't listen
  - b. Do you want to become his disciples too?
- d. An amazing thing
  - a. You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes
  - b. God doesn't listen to sinners
  - c. God listens to the God-fearing and those who do his will
  - d. Never before has a person born blind received sight
  - e. This man (Jesus) is from God because he did this.
- e. Result – cast out
  - a. You were born in sin
  - b. You were blind due to sin.
  - c. Cast out of society, excommunicated
- f. Jesus finds the formerly blind man – 9:35-41
  - a. <sup>35</sup> *Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*  
<sup>36</sup> *"Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. <sup>37</sup> Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup> "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him.*
  - b. A full progression in the man's faith: a man > a prophet > from God > the Son of Man > Lord > finally belief and worship

## 2. Application

- a. This incident is about more than a physical healing
  - a. It is really a story of whether or not one has spiritual sight.
  - b. We are all born without spiritual sight.
  - c. The Pharisees who claim to see are actually blind because they do not believe Jesus to be the one sent by God.
    - "The Pharisees do have physical sight; the sight they lack is the ability to see God revealed in Jesus, and their refusal to acknowledge this "blindness" on their part proves that they are sinners. Why? Because in the Fourth Gospel, sin is defined not by what one does, but almost exclusively by one's relationship to Jesus, and more specifically by whether one believes that God is present in Jesus." Gail O-Day, *John*, pp. 564-565
  - d. Lack of spiritual sight equals not believing and this is sin.
    - <sup>41</sup> "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.
    - a. Admitting we are blind is the first step toward seeing
    - b. Refusing to believe keeps people in spiritual blindness and darkness
- b. Faith/belief is progressive
  - a. It is a gift
  - b. And it is something to be worked out/developed
    - Faith is both self-determined & a gift. There is the gift of sight; & there is the 'hammering out' of one's convictions...The Lord [may] inject things into our lives that place us in a 'crucible' in order to test & clarify our faith. [Gilbert S. Hoo, *From Faith to Faith: Blindman's Bluff*, pp. 64-65]
  - c. Faith and sight develop and grow: Man – prophet – from God – Son of Man – Lord – believe and worship
    - In "the story of the man born blind...Jesus is first called a 'man' (9:11), then a prophet & Messiah (9:17, 22) and is finally worshiped as the Son of Man (9:35-38) ...The [4th Gospel] presents all the aspects of Jesus' identity...without negating any one of them. Jesus was a man, but not only a man; he was prophet & Messiah, but not only prophet & Messiah; he was divine, but not only divine...The evangelist wanted readers to believe that the man Jesus is also the Christ & the divine Son of God (20:31)." [Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the 4th Gospel*, p. 41]
- c. Faith grows amidst trials and adversity
  - a. Through suffering and trials we gradually come to fuller faith

- *“Faith grows amidst Trials: John 9 shows us that often first enlightenment does not result in adequate faith. Sometimes faith comes only through difficult testing and even suffering...A series of testings may be necessary before [spiritual] sight really comes. Only gradually & through suffering does the man born blind come to full faith & enlightenment.” [Raymond E. Brown, *Christ in the Gospels...*, p. 423]*
- b. The crucible of a fiery trial
- Jesus’ healing “invokes a Sabbath conflict (9:14). It is in this ‘*crucible*’ of a fiery trial that the blind man faces his adversaries alone & forges his faith... The Lord [may] inject things into our lives that place us in a ‘crucible’ in order to test & clarify our faith... (James 1:2-4) ... We all will face crises of faith.” [Gilbert S. Hoo, *From Faith to Faith: Blindman’s Bluff*, pp. 64-65]
  - *James 1:2-4* <sup>2</sup> Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.
- c. Healing which produces faith may lead to opposition and suffering
- “John...insists that those who experience Jesus’ healing enlightenment can expect to be drawn into his passion [suffering] ...In the case of the man born blind...[he] suffers the hatred of Jesus’ enemies.” [Donald L. Gelpi, *Committed Worship*, p. 181]
- d. Faith grows through testifying
- a. Jesus physical presence is not with us
  - b. We are left to speak and testify for him.
    - “Jesus has called the man forth to be a witness on his behalf. The man...has experienced a [manifestation of Christ] & so is an eyewitness. Only he does not know it yet...Jesus entrusts the healed man with the weighty responsibility of being his witness ... [But.] Jesus does not tell the man ahead of time...Jesus counts on *this process...the ‘crucible’ [the man will pass through.]* ... Jesus maintains control. Initiating a chain reaction...He foresees his accusers, the man’s interrogators...” [Gilbert S. Hoo, *From Faith to Faith: Blindman’s Bluff*, p. 77]
    - [This story]...provides the audience with a glimpse at how followers of Jesus might go on after he has left the stage of earth: like the healed man, they should imitate Jesus as a bold witness to the truth despite opposition. Jennifer Garcia Bashaw org
- e. Warning: Some people’s faith grows while other people become harder and harder by continued resistance.
- a. Some have so many arguments against believing they put themselves in a corner.
  - b. It is a refusal to believe.
    - “The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins.” ?Charles H. Spurgeon