

Bible Studies for Life Series for March 11: Jesus opens our eyes

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Jesus opens our eyes

- John 9

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I'd like to introduce you to Helen. Helen is a radiant Christian and an overcomer. Helen is 87 years young. She has buried two husbands and one son.

Helen is a recovering alcoholic—more than 50 years of sobriety, one day at a time! Nearly 20 years ago, she faced a new, nearly insurmountable obstacle. Helen lost her sight. Surgeons and specialists all did their best, but this blindness could not be overcome.

Many of us reading these lines have heard a doctor say, "Learn to live with it." How does one "learn to live with" blindness after seeing mountains and flowers and faces of children and grandchildren? Helen has overcome through her faith in God and with encouragement of her church family and her friends. She says she is one of the most blessed people in the world today.



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Some 15 years ago, she received a special, wonderful gift from an agency for the blind—a seeing-eye dog. Jackie, a black Labrador, is Helen’s constant companion, walking in the mall, going to AA meetings and always to Belmont Baptist Church in Pueblo, Colo. Jackie has her place under the pew, where she gets comfortable and often falls asleep and sometimes snores during worship.

Helen is my mom, and her testimony is that her blindness is only temporary. Mom often says, “One day very soon, I will be in the presence of my Lord, and I will see again, for all of eternity.” Some people might say Helen Harp has “spiritual sight” that many seeing people do not.

Our Bible study teaches the impact of a personal experience with Jesus. John’s Gospel is about the Son of Man who can transform us and bring light into a person’s life.

Our lesson in John 9 introduces us to a man born blind. There was not much good news for him. In most Bible dictionaries, blindness and blessing is one article, one short sentence apart. For a man born blind, a blessing must have seemed a lifetime away.

The blind in the first-century world often were reduced to a life of begging. One day, Jesus passed by, and everything changed for the man in John 9 who was born blind.

The biblical account immediately draws us in. The disciples debate the

man's cause of blindness. They ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v. 2). Jesus quickly brushes away the debate, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned" (v. 3).

Then Jesus does the work we know him for best—he focuses not on debates or dialogues but on the individual with the need. However, John carefully states in this chapter that physical blindness is not the point here. There is a much deeper level that demands our attention—spiritual blindness.

The first section of our Bible study is John 9:8-10. Earlier in the passage, Jesus has given the man born blind his healing instructions. Jesus spit on the ground and made mud. Jesus applied the mud to the man's eyes and told him to "go and wash in the pool at Siloam" (vv. 6-7).

The blind man obeys Jesus' instructions and receives his sight. The neighbors always had seen him as a blind and begging man—but now he sees. They ask: "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, 'No he only looks like him.' But he himself insisted, 'I am the man'" (v. 8). This section closes with a question, "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked (v. 10).

The next section of the Bible study is the interrogation of the blind man's parents in John 9:20-22.

The Pharisees were powerful people. They had authority to put people out of the synagogue. This might explain the fear of the parents of the blind man. This would mean a loss of social security and business opportunity. This would mean a loss of fellowship and community. This would mean humiliation.

Our next section of Bible study leads us to John 9:24-25, 30-33.

Throughout this passage, it must be pointed out a blind man sees with greater clarity while the most religious among them grow increasingly

blind. The man has received healing, and it is his main focus in each conversation. It becomes more than his testimony; it becomes his life: “Once I was blind, now I see” (v. 25).

At this point, the former blind man cannot tell the religious leaders much about Jesus. They bombard him with their questions: “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” (v. 26). He responds: “I’ve already told you, and you did not listen. Do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?” (v. 27).

His life has changed, and he knows Jesus is responsible for the change of his life. The Pharisees want no part of Jesus. How can he come from God, performing miracles on a day when folks worship?

In our final section of Bible study, we see a blind beggar becoming a worshipper (vv. 35-39). The seeing man now says, “‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshipped him” (v. 38).

Jesus opens the eyes of the blind. We don’t need more inspiration from self-help gurus. We need the transformation Jesus Christ alone can bring. He brings us the light. He brings us life. He offers and waits for our trust. Trust involves enlightenment, a growth in understanding and then commitment—an expression of personal belief.

Discussion questions

- What prevents us from seeing spiritually?
- What enables us to see spiritually?
- What keeps us from committing our life to Jesus?
- What helps us know that our faith in Christ is valid?

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