

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 4

MISSING PIECES
WHERE ARE THE STORIES?
JOHN 9:1-40
04/02/2017



MAIN POINT

Our stories help people see how real God is because of how real He is in us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

This weekend, we learned there are two stories we can tell—the story of God saving me and the story of God working in me. Do you tell stories of God's work often? Explain why or why not.

When you do tell stories, which type is easier for you to tell? Why do you think that is?

One of the ways God makes Himself known is through the stories of people who already know Him. For those of us who are Christ-followers, we have two stories to tell. The one where we became a Christ-follower and the ones where we become closer to God. And it's important to tell these stories. When we tell stories, it helps people see how real God is because of how real He is in us. And, these stories help us in our own faith because they remind us of just how active God is in our own lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:1-12.

Why did the disciples assume the man's blindness was the result of some sin on his parents' part?

Why did Jesus say this man was blind?

Although we don't always know why suffering happens, Jesus gives us an important answer in this man's case: the man who was born blind had committed no sin that should have left him blind, nor did his parents. Instead, this was an opportunity for God's works to be displayed in Him.

Re-read verses 6-7. Why did Jesus make a mud out of spit and clay and put it on the man's eyes?

Did Jesus need to do this or could He have just said a word and restored His sight? What was He showing us?

Jesus' actions in this sign are confusing, simply because we don't know exactly why He chose to do this. In other miracles, such as when He healed the lame man (chapter 5), He simply spoke and His will was done. But this time is different. It's almost like Jesus is acting as a sculptor or a molder (see Rom. 9:20), reshaping the man as He gives him new eyes. It might be a sign acknowledging that because of sin, all is right in the world. It is broken, waiting for restoration to perfection.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:13-34.

Why did John tell us this miracle occurred on the Sabbath?

Instead of rejoicing over the man's sight, the Pharisees were furious. Why do you think this miracle made the Pharisees so angry?

How was the man's response different than theirs? What could he see that they could not?

The interaction between the formerly blind man and the Pharisees could not be more ironic. Although he had once been physically blind, he could now see—and more importantly, he could see Jesus for who he was: the Messiah. The Pharisees, though they could physically see, could not see past their interpretation of the law of Moses. They were blind to the work God was doing and fought against it.

What did it mean for the Pharisees to cast the man out of the synagogue?

The synagogue was the center of social life and regular worship for the Jews. To be cast out of the synagogue was to be cut off from your entire social network—your family, friends, everyone. But even though the Pharisees had cast him out, he was not alone. Jesus was coming to find Him.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:35-40.

Why would Jesus seek out this man after he had been cast out of the synagogue?

How did the man respond to learning it was Jesus who healed him?

The spiritually blind Pharisees could not see beyond their devotion to their interpretation of the Law, even if it meant harming the poor and marginalized. But Jesus sought out the weak and suffering man. He revealed His grace and His glory not just in the act of giving him physical sight, but by giving him eyes to see Jesus' true identity.

How does spiritual blindness affect people today?

How can we overcome this?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Who needs to hear the story of your conversion? Be intentional about finding a time to share your story with someone this week.

Take a few minutes now to share a story of something God has done in your life lately. Consider splitting up into pairs or smaller groups to do this.

PRAY

Close in prayer, thanking God for the signs Jesus performed during His ministry. Thank God that just as Jesus gave physical sight to the blind man in this passage, He gives spiritual sight to those who believe in Him. Pray that we would be thankful people, that our lives would be marked by gratitude for all God has done for us, and that we would share this with others so they too might believe.

COMMENTARY

JOHN 9:1-40

Jesus performed more miracles related to giving sight to the blind than any other miracle. Such an activity was forecast in prophecy as a messianic act (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Jesus came to clear the sight of human beings who had become blinded to the things of God.

The disciples of Jesus, espousing a common perspective of the day, desired to know who sinned in regard to this man's affliction. They understood that such things occurred either as a result of an individual's personal sin or because of sin in the life of one's parents. The rabbis taught that no one died unless there had been sin, and no one suffered unless there had been sin. Even a child could sin in the womb, they suggested, or even in the preexistent state prior to conception. Refuting this entire system of thought, Jesus proclaimed that neither "this man nor his parents sinned." Instead, this man was there at that moment for God to work in His life in order to glorify Jesus.

Jesus suggested that there would come a time when the work of the kingdom of God will not be able to continue. That time is not the end of His life, as the "we" in verse 4 suggests, but when the consummation of the age takes place. Until that day God's people must do all they can to combat evil and do good in the name of Christ.

The man who had been healed testified that his own perspective was that Jesus was a Prophet. This was not the answer the Pharisees wanted to hear. Questioning the formerly blind man again, he said "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" This simple testimony has been the incontrovertible evidence for the Christian faith for centuries. His final words carried the greatest sting: "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." The Pharisees became enraged, accused the man of being a sinner, and excommunicated him from the synagogue.

The healing of this blind man took place on two levels: at the physical level his sight was restored. On the spiritual level he had come to faith in Christ. This man serves as a paradigm for Jesus' entire ministry. The Pharisees who witnessed this event responded only in indignation that Jesus would intimate that they were blind. Masterfully, Jesus responded that if they were truly blind, they would be guiltless, but since they claimed sight, their guilt remained.