

## Week 4

# Transforming Lives: the cost of following Jesus



Jesus heals a blind man, and people react  
John 9:1-41

**Jesus heals a blind man but the change provokes controversy and comes at a cost**

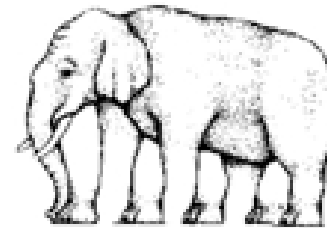
### *Opening prayer*<sup>16</sup>

As your living Word brings light out of darkness,  
O Lord, so may your Spirit renew the face of the earth,  
bending our wills to the gentle rule of your love,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**

### *Welcome and Icebreaker*

Everyone is welcomed.

**Look at each picture and share what you see!**



How many legs?



Rabbit or duck?



Woman's face or saxophonist?

*(5 minutes)*

## Reading – John 9:1-41<sup>17</sup>

*This long reading will work well with different people reading the various characters (narrator, Jesus, disciples, neighbours, other people, the man born blind, Pharisees 1, Pharisees 2, his parents).*

Narrator: As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been born blind.

Disciples: Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents' sin?

Jesus: His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. 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 for the world.

Narrator: 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.

Jesus: Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam.

Narrator: 'Siloam' means "Sent". So the man went, washed his face, and came back seeing. His neighbours and other people who had seen him begging before this asked:

Other people: Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?

Neighbours: He is the one.

Other people: No he isn't; he just looks like him.

The man: I am the man.

Neighbours + Others: How is it that you can now see?

The man: The man called Jesus made some mud, 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.

Neighbours + Others: Where is he?

The man: I don't know.

Narrator: 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.

Pharisees: How did you receive your sight?

The Man: He put some mud on my eyes; I washed my face, and now I can see.

Some Pharisees: The man who did this cannot be from God, for he does not obey the Sabbath law.

Other Pharisees: How could a man who is a sinner perform such miracles as these?

Narrator: And there was a division among them.

Pharisees: You say he cured you of your blindness – well, what do you say about him?

The man: He is a prophet.

Narrator: The Jewish authorities, however, were not willing to believe that he had been blind and could now see, until they called his parents

Pharisees: Is this your son? You say that he was born blind; how is it, then, that he can now see?

His parents: We know that he is our son, and we know that he was born blind. But we do not 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 he can answer for himself!

Narrator: 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

Pharisees: Promise before God that you will tell the truth! We know that this man who cured you is a sinner.

The man: I do not know if he is a sinner or not. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I see.

Pharisees: What did he do to you? How did he cure you of your blindness?

The man: 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?

Pharisees: 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!

The man: 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; 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 a thing.”

Pharisees: You were born and brought up in sin – and you are trying to teach us?

Narrator: And they expelled him from the synagogue.  
When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man.

Jesus: Do you believe in the Son of Man?

The man: Tell me who he is, sir, so that I can believe in him!

Jesus: You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you now.

The man: I believe, Lord!

Narrator: And the man knelt down before Jesus.

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

Pharisees: Surely you don't mean that we are blind, too?

Jesus: 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.

### *Comment*

Many newspapers and TV news programmes invite people to email in their comments on current stories.

- What strikes you about this story, and what would your comment be?

...for the Lord sees not as humans see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

*1 Samuel 16:7*

### *Change*

How were each of the following people changed by Jesus healing the man born blind?

- the blind man
- his parents
- the neighbours
- the Jewish authorities

People only change when the prospect of not changing becomes painful enough.

*A Scottish psychiatrist*

### *Cost*

What does each of these people stand to lose or gain because Jesus healed the man born blind?

- the blind man
- his parents
- the neighbours
- the Jewish authorities

“The cost of following Jesus is very high. It means changing our priorities, stopping some of the things we do, making different and difficult choices. But when we're counting the cost we must keep in mind the benefits too.”

*John Davies (www.johndavies.org/sermons/gs\_04\_09\_05.html)*

## Seeing differently

Choose **one** or **two** of these different Options for discussion...

Faith is to believe what we do not see and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.

*St Augustine*

### Option 1

- Are there ways in which meeting Jesus has opened your eyes or changed your point of view?  
Share your thoughts with others in the group.

### Option 2

Have you been treated differently or hurtfully after a major life changing event (eg illness, bereavement, redundancy, promotion, winning the lottery!)?

- How did you feel, and react?
- How do you treat other people in these situations?

### Option 3

The Pharisees were sure their views were also those of God. People in today's church hold differing views of what is right in God's sight.

- How can we tell if we are seeing things from God's viewpoint?

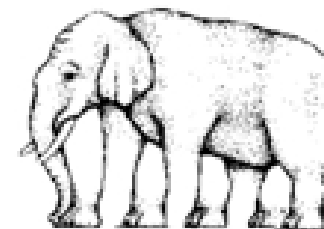
### Option 4

As the healed man answers the Pharisees questions, his view of who and what Jesus is becomes clearer.

- Has this happened to you when explaining your beliefs to others?

## Seeing God

R S Thomas wrote a poem called "The Indians and the Elephant", based on the famous Indian fable about six blind men who try to guess what animal is in front of them. They each feel a different part of the beast, and so each imagines it is something completely different.



R S Thomas' poem explores how we know, 'feel' and experience God. This is part of his poem. He wrote:

I, though I am  
not blind, feel my way  
about God, exploring him  
in darkness. Sometimes he is  
a wind, carrying me off;  
sometimes a fire devouring  
me. Rarely, too rarely  
he is as the scent  
at the heart of a great flower  
I lean over and fall into.

We cannot see God (just as the blind Indians could not see the elephant).

- How do you sense (or know) God's presence in your life?  
Do any of the poet's words ring true for you?

## Worship

Jesus says "I am the light for the world".

### Lighting of candles

Leader: We live in much darkness. We often cannot see clearly.  
We are sometimes afraid.

All: **In the darkness we light a candle to show us the way.**  
(first candle is lit)

Leader: We all have our own views. We like to be in the right.  
Each of us has our own prejudices.

All: **In our pride we light a candle of humility.**  
(*second* candle is lit)

Leader: We are sometimes lonely, and feel rejected or shut out.  
People seem harsh and uncaring.

All: **In our aloneness we light a candle of love.**  
(*third* candle is lit)

Leader: We have had visions of awe, wonder and mystery:  
seen glimpses of perfection in our imperfect world.

All: **In our wonder, we light a candle of praise.**  
(*fourth* candle is lit)

Leader: May our separate lights become one flame.

All: **That lights our way forward with God. Amen.**

*You might like to sing (or say) one of these worship songs:*

#### **Taizé chant**

The Lord is my light  
My light and salvation  
In him I trust  
In him I trust.

The Lord is my light  
My light and salvation  
In him I trust  
In him I trust.

#### **Chorus**

Open our eyes, Lord  
We want to see Jesus  
To reach out and touch him  
And say that we love him.

Open our ears Lord  
And help us to listen  
Open our eyes Lord  
We want to see Jesus.

Members of the group might like to pray out loud with very brief prayer thanking God for the light he brings to our lives, and for the way he changes us to become more like Jesus.

### *Takeaway*

During the week, think of something about which your view is changing, and ask God to help you see it more clearly.