

## STEP BY STEP THROUGH YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Week Six: Blessing in Tragedy

## Healing a Man Born Blind

Sometimes life brings tragedies in many different forms. Though, with pain and sorrow in heart, we often try to reason, justify, explain, and understand why. In the ancient world and even until today, people think that all troubles and maladies are the consequence of personal sin or even one's parents. That difficulties and illnesses are a form of karma. Though suffering can be the direct result of personal sin, this is certainly not always the case. More often than not, moment of pain and suffering are opportunities for us to draw closer to Christ and glorify Him.

### Read John 9:1-41

#### What do you think?

1. When the disciples asked Jesus about who sinned for this man to be born blind, He answered, *“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him”* (verse 3). What does Jesus mean by that?
2. Why do you think Jesus used dirt and saliva to heal the blind man?
3. Jesus told him to wash off the dirt in the pool of Siloam. Why didn't Jesus heal him right where he stood?
4. What was unusual about this miracle Jesus performed?
5. What was it that the Pharisees could not understand?
6. What did Jesus mean by *“If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains”* (verse 41)?

For those who have good eye sight, it is hard to imagine what life is like for one who does not see the light of day. The world paints a different picture in the mind of a blind person. Perception of life is through touch and sound, yet they still live in the dark. To see and recognize the world they live in is a grand desire for the blind. In Mark 10:15 - 52, Luke 18:42 - 43 and Mathew 9:27-29 we see how Jesus didn't do any specific procedures. He spoke and the blind men were healed. Here we see that this sin had a specific reason and a purpose. Here Jesus didn't only grant sight to the blind man but conveyed a message to the Pharisees.

Faith was what granted the light to the eyes of the blind man. Though blind from birth, he didn't question Jesus, didn't doubt his actions, and followed the instructions Jesus gave him. Yet the Pharisees were another question. They were suffering from another kind of blindness. Living in the spiritual darkness and not being able to see the true light of God can be as crimpling as a physical ailment.

Even today we hear about miraculously reversed “uncurable” illnesses by prayer a strong faith. Jesus heals today too, as in John 9. He saves those who are lost. When healing doesn't come when we want it most or expect it most, trust that God is working out what is best as it is stated in Romans 8:28.

Someone who is blind cannot see anything and the same is true in spiritual blindness. When we are spiritually blind, we do not see the blessings and Christ in our pain and suffering. This was the case with the Pharisees. They could not see the miracle taking place and were focused only on their painful situation: the threat to their authority.

However, God takes tragedies and misfortunes and creates blessings out of them, but only if we are willing to give them to Him. If we hold onto those pains and dwell upon them, they stay ours and become our whole life. Yet, if we give them to God, He will take them, transform them and give them back as blessings for many. Joseph in the Old Testament says is beautifully to his brothers, *“”* (Genesis 50:20).

This is a common theme throughout the Bible, where God takes things that are bad, rejected and cause suffering and uses them for His glory, to bring people to Him. The greatest of these examples is the cross. The cross, an instrument of torture and death, is now a symbol of life and resurrection. In our lives, the sufferings that we experience cannot be viewed as punishments, but as opportunities for us to come closer to Christ. In our pain and suffering, it is there when Christ is closest to us. The blind man was not just healed of his blindness, but found Christ and worshipped Him (verses 35-38). If he had never been blind, he would never have found Christ, had his entire life transformed, and become a vessel of light to others.

St. Gregory of Narek prays it best in his Book of Lamentations:

*“Like the bling from birth, without light, I am sightless to look upon your figure, however I wish, almighty and compassionate Creator, my only Protector. If you turn the caring gaze of your ineffable lobe upon this your vessel, breathing and capable speech, you could create light out of nothing (in me).”*

