

CHURCH.

LESSON 22

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> 1 TIMOTHY 1 - 4
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (1 Timothy 1 to 4).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[KEY VERSES IN JOHN]</i> (9) JOHN 8:12
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Review two by two.

(9) John 8:12. I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN]</i> JOHN 9:1-41
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study John 9:1-41 together. John 9:1-41 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the man born blind. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "You have now seen him; in fact he is the one speaking to you". He teaches that he has come to pronounce a verdict upon those who know that they are (spiritually) blind and upon those who think that they can see.

<u>STEP 1. READ.</u>	GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ John 9:1-41 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

<u>STEP 2. DISCOVER.</u>	OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand, think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. Share. (After the group members have had some time to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (The following are examples of people sharing what they have discovered. Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things, not necessarily these things)	

9:2

Discovery 1. The connection between sin and suffering.

According to the Bible, physical suffering, like hardships, persecution, accidents, sickness, defects and death, can be traced to three moral causes:

(1) Physical suffering can be traced to original sin (the sin of mankind's first ancestor, Adam).

The first ancestor. God created Adam as the first human being in the likeness of God and regarded Adam as the representative of all people in the human race. When Adam fell into sin, the whole human race bound to him fell into sin. By nature all people are sinners and are born as a child with a sinful nature.

Romans 5:12-21 and 8:19-23 and other passages in the Bible clearly teach that the fall of the first human beings into sin affected the whole human race. The sin of Adam and Eve brought enmity between Satan and man (Genesis 3:15), increased pain for women in childbearing and hard labour for man in his work (Genesis 3:19), brought a curse on the earth and physical death to man (Genesis 3:19). All people suffer because of the sin of the first people. For example, both good and bad people suffer in disasters like floods or droughts, earthquakes or epidemics and through the evil people do to each other.

(2) Physical suffering can be traced to the sin of the parents.

The community. God does not simply deal with individuals, but also with communities. God's commandments are given to the whole community, to families as well as to individuals. In Exodus 20:5, God says that he will punish the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him. Although God had led the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt and they took possession of the land of Canaan, they (the community, the nation) did not obey God nor followed God. Therefore in later generations, God handed Israel over to plundering, siege, war and exile to Assyria and Babylon (Jeremiah 32:18-24).

(3) Physical suffering can be traced to one's own personal sins.

The individual. God's judgement will reckon with every individual's sin. In Jeremiah 31:30 he says, "Everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes - his own teeth will be set on edge". And because all people have sinned, all people suffer and all people will die! "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

It is clear that physical suffering due to one's own sins and due to one's parents' sin is in fact the result of the fall of Adam into sin. However, the Jews tended to exaggerate the importance of one's parents' sin and one's own sin out of proportion. They believed that there must always be a definite relationship between one's suffering and one's sin. They traced every piece of suffering to a specific sin. For example, the friends of Job traced his suffering to his sin of cruelty to the widow and the fatherless (Job 22:5-11). The Jewish religious teachers (rabbis) even taught that babies were able to sin in the womb. They concluded that Esau had tried to kill his brother while he was still in the womb (Genesis 25:22-26).

(4) Physical suffering may have a divine purpose.

In Luke 13:2-5, Jesus teaches that people who suffer have no greater guilt than those who do not suffer! He says, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish".

Here in John 9:3 Jesus teaches that suffering does not only have a cause, but may also have a divine purpose! This man suffered blindness, not because he or his parents had sinned, but so that his healing may bring glory to God! His suffering had a purpose! His healing would bring people to know and accept Jesus Christ! However difficult this may be to accept, all afflictions and calamities have as their ultimate purpose the glorification of God in Christ!

9:3-5

Discovery 2. The works of God which Christians must do while it is still day.

In John 9:4, Jesus says, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."

(1) There is only a short time to do God's work.

Jesus says that *his day* is only as long as he is still on earth. For his disciples, their day is also only as long as they live on earth! With respect to every disciple of Jesus today, there is a divinely appointed time to do God's work on earth. God places every Christian only for a certain length of time on earth to live and to work. That is the only time he gets! Therefore, every Christian must make the most of the opportunities God has given to him (Ephesians 5:16)!

(2) The work of God consists of deeds of love.

God constantly brings people on our path. We have a choice to react or respond in three ways.

- Some people are jealous of the people that God brings on their way and attempt to destroy them. They cannot do anything constructive. They can only criticise, gossip, abuse or even oppress and persecute. This is what the Jewish religious leaders did to Jesus.
- Other people are curious about the people that God brings on their way and try to know more about them. The disciples wanted to solve a theological question about whose sin was the cause of this blind man's suffering. However, Jesus does not only want us to get involved in discussions. He wanted action (to perform deeds)!
- The third way is to do the work of God and build other people up or help them!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 9:1-41 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

9:13

Question 1. Who were these Pharisees to whom the former blind beggar was brought?

Notes.

These Pharisees were acting under the orders from the Sanhedrin, which was the highest ruling body among the Jews. They had the authority to expel the blind man from meetings in the synagogue (John 9:22,34). At times the Sanhedrin would delegate a group of Pharisees to examine whether a person was the coming Messiah (John 1:24). In chapter 9, they were probably examining the miracle that was allegedly performed by the Messiah. Moreover, the parents of the blind man exercised extreme caution, because they were afraid that the Pharisees might throw them out of the synagogue. All these facts show that these Pharisees were probably a group of officially appointed and authorised representatives of the Sanhedrin.

9:16-34

Question 2. What method of argumentation did the Pharisees use against their enemies?

Notes.

John chapter 9 gives a good insight into the methods used in arguments by the Pharisees against their enemies.

(1) The Pharisees argued amongst themselves in order to arrive at a conclusion.

In John 9:16 some Pharisees argued against Jesus as follows:

- All people who come from God keep the Sabbath
- This man, Jesus, does not keep the Sabbath
- Therefore, Jesus is not from God (and has not performed a miracle)

Their argument seems logical, but is wrong, because it is not based on the teaching of the Bible concerning the Sabbath. It was based on their own regulations concerning the Sabbath!

Other Pharisees argued as follows for Jesus:

- Only people who are not sinners can open the eyes of people born blind.
- This man, Jesus, has opened the eyes of a person born blind.
- Therefore, Jesus is not a sinner.

The Pharisees were divided amongst themselves. While some concluded that Jesus could not have come from God, others argued that he must have come from God.

(2) The Pharisees ignored the facts, but used fear to rule over people.

In John 9:17-23, they questioned the parents of the blind man. The parents stated that this was their son and that he definitely was blind. Therefore, a great miracle had really taken place. Nobody could deny these facts!

But, alas, the Pharisees were not willing to admit that Jesus had performed this miracle! Instead, the Sanhedrin had already made a decision, that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue (verse 22). The Pharisees made decisions to inspire fear in the people, so that the people would not dare to oppose them! However, they had no authority from God to make such a decision, because it is not they but God who determines who the Messiah is and what he does!

(3) The Pharisees twisted the facts in order to discredit Jesus.

In John 9:24 they tried to make the blind man say things that would discredit Jesus. They said, "We know that this man, Jesus, is a sinner. Therefore, give the glory of performing this miracle to *God*". They wanted the blind man to say that it was *not Jesus*, but God who performed the miracle. They argued against Jesus:

- Only people who are not sinners can open the eyes of people born blind.
- This man, Jesus, is a sinner (He does not keep the Sabbath).
- Therefore, he cannot have opened the eyes of a person born blind.

The Pharisees twisted the facts. They wanted everybody to believe that Jesus was a sinner and could not have performed such a miracle. But the man who was born blind kept standing on the facts (verse 25): "One thing I know, I was blind but now I see!"

(4) The Pharisees repeated their questions in order to catch him making an inconsistent statement.

John 9:26-27. The Pharisees kept on asking the same questions again and again in order to catch their opponent saying something contradictory. But the blind man saw through their method of stalling the discussion. He asked the Pharisees if the real reason why they wanted to hear his answers again was that they wanted to become disciples of Jesus. This made the Pharisees furious.

(5) The Pharisees did not admit defeat, but instead resorted to abuse.

John 9:28-33. The Pharisees reacted like people in a shame culture: they could not and would not admit defeat! So they resorted to reviling and abuse. They called Jesus "that fellow" and "a sinner" and said that they did not know where he came from.

This time, the blind man answered the Pharisees with their own method (John 9:31). He argued for Jesus as follows:

- Only does not listen to sinners, only to God-fearing people
- God listened to this man, Jesus (and had opened the eyes of a blind man)
- Therefore, Jesus definitely came from God (otherwise he would not have been able to perform a miracle)!

The blind man defeated the Pharisees with their own method of argumentation! The only difference was that the argumentation of the blind man was correct and very biblical. God listens to the prayers of a righteous man (1 Peter 3:12). He listened to Jesus!

(6) The Pharisees resorted to violence or misuse of their authority when they lose.

John 9:34. The Pharisees suffered a humiliating defeat. The only thing left for them to do was to use violence and to misuse their authority! They threw the former blind man out of the synagogue. This was a serious punishment. A person, who was thrown out of the synagogue, was cut off from the religious and social life of Israel! People would avoid him and refuse to do business with him. People might even be inclined to kill him without fearing a trial. In certain religions this is still done today!

9:35

Question 3. How does Jesus Christ approach people?

Notes.

Later Jesus went out and sought the blind man whom he had healed. While the Pharisees rejected and avoided him, Jesus sought and found him! While the religious leaders and teachers occupied themselves with religious rules and customs, Jesus Christ was interested in his physical, spiritual and social healing! Religious people are not interested in a person, but Jesus came to save the whole man! He came to heal bodies, to restore broken relationships, to reconcile people to God, to help the needy and to speak for the oppressed (Matthew 11:2-6). While the religious leaders and teachers were only concerned with their own power, position of authority and honour, Jesus Christ was concerned with the salvation and welfare of other people. While the religious leaders and teachers occupied themselves with religious rules and customs, Jesus was occupied with the whole man.

9:38

Question 4. May Christians worship Jesus Christ?

Notes. In John 9:38 we read, “Then the blind man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshipped Jesus”. The man recognised that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God and therefore the proper object of worship. He did not simply respect or revere Jesus (as some religions still do), but actually worshipped Jesus! He fell on his knees before Jesus.

In John 4:20-24, the same word “worship” definitely indicates the worship of God. Also in other parts of the Gospel, Jesus is worshipped by his disciples and by other people (Matthew 2:11; 14:33; 28:9,17; Luke 24:52; Revelation 5:13-14). He never objected or corrected people. He continually claimed that he was the Son of God, equal to God the Father and equally worthy of honour and worship!

9:39-41

Question 5. When are people spiritually blind?

Notes. In John 9:39 and 41, Jesus teaches, “For judgement I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind”. To the Pharisees he says, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim that you can see, your guilt remains”. The Pharisees are not forgiven, because they do not want to acknowledge that they are sinners!

The first coming of Jesus Christ into this world was for the purpose of “salvation” (John 3:16-17) and of “judgement” (Matthew 3:11-12; John 3:18,36). To those who believe he gives salvation and to those who reject him he punishes with perdition.

(1) The people who acknowledge that they are blind will see again.

People who acknowledge that they are sinners and do not have the required righteousness and holiness of God, are like spiritual blind people whose eyes have been opened. They realise that God has touched their heart and mind and made them receptive to his word (the gospel). They repent of their sin and helplessness and reach out to Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. They receive salvation by receiving Jesus Christ. Their spiritual have been opened, they can see the truth and see all things from God’s point of view.

(2) The people who claim that they always see will become blind.

People who acknowledge that they are sinners and need salvation are like people who see that have become blind. They cannot see their own sins, weaknesses and shortcomings or do not want to see (acknowledge) them. They always claim that they are correct and “good” people. They have no need for a Saviour. They close their mind and harden their heart against the gospel (the words of God). They do not repent and do not want to have anything to do with Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. By rejecting Jesus Christ, they reject salvation. They become so blind that they can no longer discern truth and can only look at things from the point of view of the sinful world.

STEP 4. APPLY.**APPLICATIONS**

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 9:1-41.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 9:1-41.

- 9:3. Know that suffering does not only have a cause, but may also have a purpose! The suffering of the man born blind had a purpose! His healing would bring people to know and accept Jesus Christ! However difficult this may be to accept, all afflictions and calamities have as their ultimate purpose the glorification of God in Christ!
- 9:4. Realise that God has only given to you this life, whether short or long, to do the work of God. You will never again get a chance to do on this earth what God wants you to do. Plan your life around the purpose God has for your life.
- 9:4. Realise that the work of God is to take constructive action and help the needy!
- 9:16. Always ask yourself, "On what does the other person base his argument? On the Bible or on his own legalistic interpretations?" Many arguments seem logic, but are wrong, because they are based on the wrong premises.
- 9:23. Realise that some religious leaders and teachers will try to force you to accept their point of view by threatening to throw you out of the religious community and the society. Never give in to religious or social pressure.
- 9:24-25. Realise that some religious leaders and teachers will twist the facts in order to win their argument. Always stick to the facts.
- 9:25. Be single-minded and know in what way Jesus Christ has changed your life.
- 9:39. Acknowledge your spiritual blindness and you will receive salvation.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 9:1-41.

I want to do the works of God as long as I still live. God has given me one life only and I want to dedicate this one life to his service. I want to avoid being jealous and destructive, and instead be constructive. I want to believe and do what the Bible teaches and especially love and help people in need.

I want to remember that suffering is part of the Christian life. There will be times when I suffer, because of my own sins or because of my parent's sins or because of the sins of my society and my culture. But there will also be times when, like the blind man, I will suffer, because God has a glorious purpose in mind. Suffering is never without a cause or a purpose. Suffering is a means to glorify God, to grow in sanctification and to prepare for the perfection in eternity.

STEP 5. PRAY.**RESPONSE**

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 9:1-41.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON

(**Group leader.** Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. **Preach, teach or study the Bible study** of John 9 together with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of 1 Timothy 5 – 6 and 2 Timothy 1 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (10) John 10:28. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. **Update your notebook** on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.