



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

The Pharisees were experts in the Scriptures and the guardians of morality. In matters of right and wrong, they swung the gavel of authority. And yet, despite their rank in religious society, pride had blinded them to the true nature of godliness. They put on a good show of piety, but, as commentator William Barclay wrote,

because they had clung to *their idea of religion* instead of to God's idea, they had in the end drifted so far from God that they had become godless. They were in the terrible position of men who were godlessly serving God. (emphasis added)<sup>1</sup>

In John 9, the apostle set in contrast these pretentious Pharisees with a sight-impaired beggar who, despite his label of "sinner" by the religious elite, turned out to be the godliest of them all. It's dramatic irony at its best! The real blind men were the Pharisees who play-acted their spirituality, "blind men's bluff," while the one with the clearest spiritual sight was a beggar who couldn't see!



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As you open the Scriptures, ask the Lord to open your eyes like He opened the eyes of the beggar to see His radiant glory. Ask Him to lead you into deeper worship by revealing any blind spots—areas of unbelief—that Jesus can heal and cleanse. Write your prayer below.

## Quotable

*The man born blind confessed Jesus as "My Lord." Isn't that marvelous? Not only was he given sight physically, he was given sight spiritually. What a day in that man's life!*

— Charles R. Swindoll





**Observation: Case and Cure, Questions and Answers, Belief and Unbelief**

A key principle in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is observation. Observation helps you grasp the flow of the passage and identify the parts that make up the whole. Chuck Swindoll divided this passage into three broad sections:

- Case and Cure (John 9:1–7): Jesus restores the beggar’s sight.
- Questions and Answers (9:8–34): The neighbors and Pharisees interrogate the man.
- Belief and Unbelief (9:35–41): Jesus affirms the beggar’s faith and exposes the Pharisees’ spiritual blindness.

We can also outline John 9 by listing the cast of characters. Read the passages below and fill in the people who interacted with the beggar in each of the following scenes:

- Scene 1: \_\_\_\_\_ and the beggar (9:1–7)
- Scene 2: \_\_\_\_\_ and the beggar (9:8–12)
- Scene 3: \_\_\_\_\_ and the beggar (9:13–34)
- Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_ and the beggar and the Pharisees (9:35–41)



Centerstage thematically is the contrast between the humble faith of the beggar and the hardened unbelief of the Pharisees. Read the verses in the following chart and write down additional contrasts you find between the beggar and the Pharisees regarding the issues of sin and guilt and their views of Jesus.

Issue	The Beggar	The Pharisees
Sin and Guilt	John 9:1–3	John 9:39–41
Views of Jesus	John 9:11, 17, 38	John 9:16, 24, 28

Now let’s raise the curtain to reveal the first scene, which begins with Jesus and His disciples encountering the unlikely hero of faith hidden beneath a tattered beggar’s shawl.

**Case and Cure—John 9:1–7**

Based on their question to Jesus, what did the disciples assume about the beggar’s disability since he was blind from birth (John 9:1–2)?

The disciples viewed the man’s congenital impairment negatively, wondering, as many do when they see disabled people, *How could this terrible thing have happened?* But Jesus corrected their nearsighted perspective, stating the positive, in effect: “What an opportunity! God can use this person to show His sensitivity, power, and glory!”



Read Jesus' answer to His disciples (John 9:3–5). What attributes of His Son did God intend to display through the beggar's disability?



*Searching the Scriptures Tip*

As we picture Jesus relating to the beggar, let's employ Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* tool of reading a text with all our senses. "As we learn to engage the senses," writes Chuck, "the verses come alive in our minds . . . and ultimately in our lives!"<sup>2</sup> Imagine the man's sightless existence as he lived in total darkness. Imagine how people treated him as an outcast to be pitied but never embraced. Imagine Jesus' compassionate touch and hopeful words. What did Jesus say and do to communicate the man's value and dignity?

Questions and Answers—John 9:8–34

The man obeyed Jesus' command to "go wash [himself] in the pool of Siloam" (John 9:7). As he washed the mud from his eyes, to his amazement, the veil of darkness dissolved. For the first time, he saw his own hands. As he looked up, a new world unfolded before him. Color and light cascaded through his mind, flooding his soul with childlike wonder. He ran home to his neighbors, who rejoiced with him and threw a party! Well, no, not exactly.



### *The Neighbors and the Beggar*

Instead of confetti, these killjoys pelted the man with skeptical questions (John 9:8–12). Who? How? Where? Their response reflected suspicion, doubt, and resistance. What do you think was at the root of their fearful attitude? (Hint: Their actions in John 9:13–14 may offer a clue, along with the beggar's parents' fear in 9:22.)

### *The Pharisees and the Beggar*

By making mud and performing a healing on Saturday, Jesus had violated the Pharisees' rules against working on the Sabbath—an intricate web of regulations spun from their own traditions rather than from God's law (Mark 7:7–8). For a fuller explanation of the Pharisees' Sabbath rules, read the section "Prejudice and Conviction" (John 9:13–16) in William Barclay's commentary on John 9, *The Gospel of John*.

Like prosecuting attorneys, the Pharisees pressed the beggar for information that would convict Jesus as a Sabbath-breaking sinner. At first, they were divided over Jesus. What was the reason for their difference of opinion (9:16)?

Unwilling to accept the beggar's view that Jesus was a prophet (9:17), the Pharisees cast doubt on the miracle, questioning whether the beggar had truly been blind (9:18). They called the parents to the witness stand. What did the beggar's parents say about their son but refuse to say about Jesus (9:19–23)?



Even ironclad evidence for the miracle could not break the Pharisees' rock-hard bias against Jesus. Follow the dialogue in John 9:24–34, and write down the Pharisees' prejudicial accusations and how the beggar beat them at their own game.

The Pharisees heaped abuse on the beggar, accused him of being born in sin, and ordered him out of the synagogue. Barclay writes,

The moment insult and abuse and threat enter into an argument, it ceases to be an argument and becomes a contest in bitterness. If we become angry and resort to wild words and hot threats, all we prove is that our case is disturbingly weak.<sup>3</sup>



### Correlation: Miracle and Prophecy

Earlier, when the Jewish leaders questioned Jesus' messiahship, Jesus pointed to His miracles as proof of His identity. Jesus said, "I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me" (John 5:36).

Healing the blind man was particularly convincing evidence that Jesus was from God because it was a fulfillment of what prophecies in Isaiah 35:4–5 and 42:6?

The Pharisees' spiritual blindness, which was harder to heal than the beggar's sight impairment, was evidence of what other prophecy in Isaiah 56:10?



Because the man was born blind, the healing had to be a miracle. No other explanation was possible—and neither was any conclusion other than Jesus was the Son of God. The real issue wasn't believing the miracle but believing in Jesus as the miracle worker.



### Interpretation: Belief and Unbelief

All lines of the account converge in its interpretation, which was meant to lead John's readers to a decision point. Would we follow in the faith of the once-blind beggar? Or in the hardened unbelief of the Pharisees?

Read John 9:36–41, and describe the characteristics of belief that the beggar displayed versus the Pharisees' characteristics of unbelief.

Jesus interpreted His own actions in verse 39. In His words, what was the meaning of His miracle? How did His actions demonstrate grace to the outcast of society as well as to the religious elite?

John 9 opened with the disciples' question, "Who is the sinner?" The Pharisees pointed their judgmental fingers at the beggar and Jesus, but truly they were the ones living in spiritual darkness. Jesus gave the beggar a healing touch and the Pharisees a disciplinary rebuke, but His objective was the same, as with every person He encountered: to bring all people to repentance and faith.



### Application: What's Our Response?

Just as the Light of the World gave sight to the man born blind, so also Jesus can lead us out of spiritual darkness when we admit our need and reach out to Him.



What blind spot or weakness in your life is impairing you? Bring this need out of the dark into the light of Jesus' grace. What compassionate touch do you desire from Him?

Jesus helped His disciples change their perspective toward the beggar. What changes in perspective can you ask Him to help you make?

As we conclude our study, invite the Word made flesh to incarnate Himself in your life and fill every dark corner with His light of peace, joy, and hope.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, in the quietness of this moment, I surrender my will to Your will. Like the man born blind, I have no capacity to see beyond the darkness of my surroundings. Reattach the broken parts and restore my eyes of faith; help me see only Jesus and His grace. And help me keep my eyes on Him, who leads me each step of my way. Amen.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, (Chapters 8 to 21), rev. ed., The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 31.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2016), 94.
3. Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, 49.

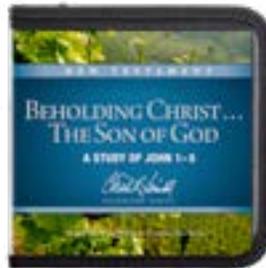




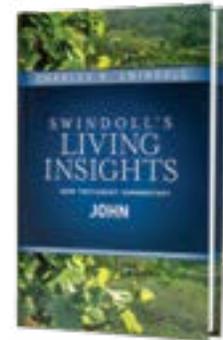
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For the 2018 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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