

## How do you and I see others?

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Sunday morning service

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"This is how it is; this is how I see it; irrespective of how it actually is, or how others see it. Because I see it like that, it is correct."

We must BEWARE of labelling people.

Every person we see differently.

- Forming opinions of other people.
- Categorizing people according to our personal opinions.

### **YOU WILL NOT SEE WHAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO SEE.**

When you travel to work/walk to the shops – for years you take the same route.

We are so focussed on where we are going/what we are doing, that we are sometimes blind to the facts of what we see. Our eyes see it, but we don't take it in.

### **John 9:1-34**

*As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.*

As Jesus went along, He saw a man blind from birth - that's **availability**.

Jesus gave him sight - that's **helpfulness**.

And, putting spit-mud in the man's eyes is a most creative way to heal blindness – that's **creativity**.

When the man went to the pool and washed the mud out of his eyes, he could instantly see! – that's **a miracle**.

But the healing of this blind man triggered a number of reactions from every direction. The disciples of Jesus didn't understand nor did the blind man's family and neighbours. And the Pharisees most-definitely had some questions. The whole event created such uproar that the poor fellow was kicked out of his own church. God | Jesus | His miracles become problematic for certain churches. The BIGGEST BLINDNESS, however, was in the minds of the people who raised questions about the man whom Jesus healed. They couldn't see the man, the human being who was given eyesight. They only saw a label. What is worse, that they could not see or that they would not see?

There are 5 different groups of people that viewed this blind man from 5 different perspectives:

*(Let us go back in time – using our imagination, let us step into the Bible)*

#### **1. The disciples only saw a religious question.**

The disciples asked Jesus a religious question: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). For centuries, traditions had said that people were struck by catastrophe because of sin, either their own or their parents'. When a person suffered, they simply got what they had coming. The disciples saw only a religious question, they did not see a person. The blind man's feelings were ignored, nobody was interested in his feelings.

#### **2. The neighbours saw a category.**

"Isn't this the beggar?" To them, he was not a person, but "the beggar" – a blind beggar. Labelling smoothly and conveniently distances us from involvement. We may even feel that we have "handled" the situation well, because we have defined which category he/she belongs in.

#### **3. The Pharisees saw a problem.**

The Pharisees viewed the blind man from a third perspective. "Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 'Tell us how you received your sight.' '[Jesus] put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.'" (John 9:14-15). "We've got a problem here" – not a blind person who can now see. The Pharisees saw a problem, rather than a person. "We've got to discredit this 'healer' of blind men. If our people go off after Him, we'll lose our power. We'll have problems. We've got to keep our religious forum at all costs. Sure, we'll have to dump this blind man out of the church." We as God's people simply must not allow any institution to distract us from Christlike respect and compassion for individual people. When we abuse people for any reason we downgrade the value and meaning of people in the name of God.

#### **4. The parents saw a family role.**

"We must protect our son and ourselves." A fourth take on this blind man came from his parents. They were frightened. People routinely got kicked out of the synagogue for crossing swords with the leaders. And a sure way to offend the leaders was to admit interest in Jesus. "Is this your son?" the leaders asked. "How is it that he can now see?" "Yes, that's our son, all right. Yes, he was born blind and can now see! But understand, we have no idea how it was done!" The parents' response was self-protective. When you want to protect yourself, the truth will be distorted.

#### **5. Jesus saw a whole person**

Finally, let's look at this man through the eyes of Jesus. Jesus "saw a man blind from birth." That's sensitivity. In a world of loneliness and helplessness, Jesus saw a person! A blind person! Blind all his life! The disciples, neighbours, Pharisees and family didn't really see. They did not discern who the blind man really was. They were looking only to their own concerns, but Jesus saw. What is more, he saw a man. He knew that he was in touch with a human being. He did not see a question or a problem or a label or a family role. He saw a person.

Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me" (John 9:24). How? What does it mean to do the work of God? Mostly it means treating people like God treats people.

To reflect the gentleness, kindness, goodness, mercy, patience, joy, peace, courage, and the sensitivity of God. Then the work of God is being done through us! Then people can see God in us!

Sometimes I become so task-orientated that I make too little time for people. I rationalize to myself that the task is "the work of God." But God's most important work is people.

A non-churchgoing lady was befriended by some people in a small-town church. It happened when her baby fell sick with a life-threatening illness that lasted for weeks. People from that church pulled alongside her. They cleaned her house, put food in the refrigerator, and even helped pay the medical bills. Most importantly, they took turns holding the baby, day and night, around the clock until the baby was well. Eventually, the lady began attending the church. Her unchurched friends asked, "Are you going to church somewhere?" "Yes, I've been going with the people over here." "Oh, watch out for churches," the friends scoffed. "They are full of goody-goodies. They only want your money. They say that nobody is going to heaven but them." The lady responded, "I've never heard them say that. They have never asked me for money. And I've been over there for weeks. I only know that when I thought my baby was dying, they held my baby."

Her words resonate with the words of the blind man: "I don't know who He was; I just know that I was blind, and now I can see."

When the blind man was healed, the watching crowd saw a religious question, a label, a problem, and a family role. But none of them saw a person. And they certainly didn't see "an instrument of God's glory." Only Jesus saw the man. And only Jesus saw God at work!

Again the Pharisees summoned the man to come see them. A "summons" is serious stuff. I picture the Pharisees around a horseshoe-shaped table with the man who had been blind on a chair in the middle. "Give glory to God," they demanded (v24).

The teachers of the law asserted further, "We know this man is a sinner" (John 9:24). "All I know is that I used to be blind and now I see." Then they answered, "How did this 'healer' do this?" "I've already told you once, why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples too?" By adding the word "too", he implied "like me, I am already a disciple".

This was too much for the Pharisees. "You are this fellow's disciple? We're disciples of Moses. Who knows where this Jesus guy came from?" "Well, that's remarkable. I thought you guys were theologians! Jesus opened my eyes! Yet you don't know where He's from? What have you been teaching me in Sabbath school all these years? You taught me that God doesn't listen to sinners. He only listens to the godly man. Now, nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. Why, gentlemen, if this Man weren't from God, He could do nothing of this magnitude. You are the ones who taught me that!"

"I am His disciple."

"This man is from God."

When he turned their own logic against them, the Pharisees exploded! "You are steeped in sin. Your very blindness is the result of sin! Where do you get the nerve to lecture us on theology?" And when they had verbally unloaded on him, they threw him out of the synagogue.

What a turbulent day for this man! Absolutely amazing. Utterly confusing. That morning, his lifetime of darkness had exploded into the glory of sight. By noon, the world had gone crazy. By mid-afternoon, he landed on his head in the dust outside his home church.

### **John 9:35-38**

*Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.*

Jesus commissions us to touch people the same way.

Discern needs.

Do what you can, then back off.

Pray and wait.

Then be there when the time is right for the next step towards God.