

## **FOUR THINGS WE NEED TO KNOW (John 9:24-10:5)**

There is a wise, Arab proverb that says:

He who knows not and knows not he knows not is a fool—shun him;  
He who knows not and knows he knows not is simple—teach him;  
He who knows and knows not he knows is asleep—wake him;  
He who knows and knows he knows is wise—follow him.

We serve a wise Savior. He knows, and He knows that He knows. And since we know that He knows, we need to follow Him.

The word know—k-n-o-w—is a big word in the Bible. It is used over 950 times in the pages of Scripture. Today, we return to our quick journey through the Gospel of John, in which we are drawing one sermon from each of the 21 chapters in John. We come today to John 9.

Sometimes, chapter divisions come in odd places. Since chapter 10 continues a story that began in chapter 9, we are going to include a small portion of that 10<sup>th</sup> chapter in this message. The word *know* appears 11 times in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter and 2 times in the first 5 verses of chapter 10. It shows up a handful of other times in the remainder of that chapter. We are going to focus on John 9:24-10:5.

Before I read that passage, I do need to set the stage. Look at 9:1. Let me paraphrase just a portion of that already brief verse: “Jesus saw a man who had never seen.” The word *saw* is an interesting word. Usually, it means to view something with your physical eyes, but sometimes it means *discernment, insight, a type of knowledge*. The same word can refer either to physical vision or mental comprehension. Let me give you an example of that word being used in both ways. Look at John 1:47-48. The word *saw* is used twice in those two verses and is the same word in the Greek language. It refers the first time to physical sight. Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards Him. He saw Nathanael with His eyes. Jesus comments about Nathanael’s character, and Nate asks, “How do you know me?” Jesus basically says, “You remember when you were sitting under the fig tree before Philip came to see you? Yeah, before then, I saw you.” He means, “I knew you.” Same word—two different meanings.

We use that the word *see* both ways, too. Of course, we use it to indicate physical sight, but surely you have said to someone, “I see what you mean” or “I see where you are going with that.” We are saying, “I know. I understand.”

John loves to use words symbolically. Two of the biggest ones for John were “light” and “darkness.” When John uses those words, he isn’t talking about wattage or time of day. He is referring to a knowledge of the truth or blindness to the truth. In our story, here is a man who is physically blind, but by the end of the story, that man is able to see both physically and spiritually, and the religious critics show themselves to be the ones who are truly blind.

Chapter 9 begins with the words “He saw” and ends with Jesus saying to those critics,

“You say, ‘We see.’” In reality, they were terribly blind. The word “blind” is used 13 times in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter, and there are numerous references to the words *saw*, *see*, *seen*, *seeing*, *sight*, and 7 times it is mentioned that Jesus had *opened* that man’s eyes. The formerly blind man’s eyes were opened by Jesus. He did so in more ways than one while the eyes of the religious critics were blind and tightly shut.

I am sure that at some point you have said to someone, “Brother, you need to know this” or “Sister, this is what you need to know.” No doubt, you have been in a class and the teacher or the professor said, “Class, you need to know this; you will see this again.” In other words, he was saying, “Take good notes and study those notes because this is going to be on the test.”

After Jesus healed the man who had been born blind, the religious leaders started an investigation. They wanted to discredit Jesus. In fact, Jesus gave them some ammunition because He healed the man on the Sabbath. In their way of thinking, that constituted working on the Sabbath which was a big no-no, in their eyes. They questioned that man who had been healed. They called for his parents. Maybe this was a different man who wasn’t really blind from birth. They struck out on both accounts. The parents confirmed this man was their son, and they affirmed that he was born blind.

Jesus’ critics were desperate for more dirt; so, they called the healed man in to conduct a second interview. Let’s pick up in John 9:24. I will read through to John 10:5. As I read, pay attention to the word *know*. We will come across it 9 times in these verses.

Based on the story we just read, I want to show you four things we need to know.

## **We Need to Know How Jesus Has Changed Our Life**

According to what John recorded in v. 24, the religious critics said of Jesus, “We **know** this man is a sinner.” Well, they got that wrong. They didn’t know as much as they thought they knew. They were the ones who were sinners, along with you and me. Jesus alone is the one who never sinned. For Him to be the Savior and to be an acceptable sacrifice, He had to be sinless, and He was.

I love the healed man’s response in v. 25. Essentially, he said, “You say He is a sinner. Well, I don’t know about that, but let me tell you what I do know. I was blind, and now I see, and it is all because of Him.”

Has Jesus changed your life? If you claim to be a Christian and He hasn’t, there’s a problem. There needs to be progression from what you were then to what you are now. There also needs to be progression from what you are now to what you will become next year, and the year after that, and the year after that.

I have a lot of favorite verses, and one of my favorites is Philippians 1:6 where Paul writes, “And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” The day God began a good work in you was the day you trusted Jesus as your Savior and Lord. The day of Jesus Christ is the day He returns to this earth. In the interim between those two days, God is working on you. He is refining you. He is smoothing out the rough places. He is actually doing a complete makeover—yanking out the old and installing the new.

Regardless, it is not enough to know Jesus has changed you; you need to be able to tell others **how** Jesus has and is changing you. Let me ask you some questions.

- Has Jesus changed your vocabulary? Are there some words you no longer use and some new ones you have started to use?
- Has Jesus changed your conversational habits? Are there some things you now talk about that you used to not talk about and vice versa?
- Has Jesus changed your sexual ethics? “If it feels good, do it,” is not a Christ-honoring standard.
- Has Jesus changed your business ethics? If you are labor, you are doing an honest day’s labor regardless of whether you are getting an honest day’s pay. If you are management, you are treating your workers well.
- Has Jesus changed your priorities, what you consider important and not so important?
- Has Jesus made you a better son or daughter, a better husband or wife, a better dad or mom?
- Has Jesus helped you to deal more constructively with criticism or anger or disappointment or stress?

None of us can say, “I’ve arrived!” We are all works in progress.

A few years ago, the singer, songwriter Mac Davis died. He was a superstar back in the 70’s and 80’s. He had a funny song entitled, “Hard to Be Humble.” Here is the chorus:

Oh Lord, it’s hard to be humble  
When you’re perfect in every way  
I can’t wait to look in the mirror  
Cause, I get better looking each day  
To know me is to love me  
I must be a [heck] of a man  
Oh Lord, it’s hard to be humble,  
But I’m doing the best that I can

I’m here to tell you, every one of us has reason to be humble because none of us are perfect, but because of Jesus we should be better today than we were yesterday and the day before that.

There is a second thing we need to know.

### **We Need to Know God Judges Willful Blindness**

Likely, you have heard it said, “There are none so blind as those who will not see.” That was the case of those religious leaders who opposed Jesus. The blind man who had been healed by Jesus had the courage to point out the hypocrisy of those men. Let’s read our text again about the conversation between the man Jesus healed and those who

questioned him. Look at John 9:26-34.

I love v. 30. There is a multitude of people who are doing an amazing thing. Everywhere a person looks he or she can see the handiwork of God. Whether one uses a telescope to study the heavens or a microscope to peer into the cell or the naked eye to view the beauty of this world, we can see the work of a Grand Designer and the power of a great Creator, and yet there are so many who see all of that, and still, they deny the existence of God.

There is a difference between not seeing God and refusing to see God. One of the great scientific minds of the last fifty years was a man named Stephen Hawking. Among other great accomplishment, he was a professor at Cambridge University and was appointed to a post once held by Isaac Newton. He died in 2018. In 2010, Hawking said, "One can't prove that God doesn't exist, but science makes God unnecessary." In his book, *The Grand Design*, he wrote, "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing."

I have three simple questions: How can you have design without a designer, and how can you have a law without a lawgiver. And how can you get everything from nothing?

While Hawking held a post once occupied by Newton, in my view, he couldn't hold a candle to Isaac Newton. Newton once said, "He who thinks half-heartedly will not believe in God; but he who really thinks has to believe in God."

If those opponents of Jesus had really thought about what Jesus had done, they would had to have believed in Him, but they focused instead on their prejudice, their hatred, their opposition to Him. As a result, they closed their eyes.

Since the healed man spoke positively about Jesus, and since he pointed out their own hypocrisy, the Jewish leaders cast him out. That means they excommunicated him from worship in the temple. He was now *persona non grata*, which is a Latin phrase that means "an unacceptable or unwelcome person."

It is okay to not be accepted by the powers that be if you are accepted by the greatest Power in the universe.

That phrase "cast out" is found often in the NT. It is most often used in connection with Jesus freeing those who were demon-possessed. He cast the demons out, but there is one occasion when that phrase is used differently. In Luke 13 we find Jesus traveling to Jerusalem for the last time. As He is on the way, He is asked a question. He answers the question by telling a parable. At the end of the parable, the Master of the House speaks to those who are outside the banquet hall. He says to them, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" Jesus follows up that story with this line: "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out."

Those blind men had the power to cast out. Because they were willfully blind, a greater power would cast them out.

When God changes you and you no longer do the things you used to do and live the way you used to live, you may discover that you are cast out of the group with whom you used to hang. You are no longer welcome.

That is nothing compared to those who are cast out of the Kingdom of God because

they chose blindness rather than to embrace the One who is the light of the world.  
There is a third thing we need to know.

### **We Need to Know We Believe in Jesus Christ**

Jesus heard the man he had healed had been cast out; so, He sought the man out. He found him and spoke with him. Let's listen in to that conversation. Look at 9:35-41.

Some Greek manuscripts have Jesus referring to Himself as the Son of God in v. 35. Older and better manuscripts have Jesus referring to Himself as the Son of Man. Which is it? I can't speak with certainty, but it makes little difference. Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man repeatedly. He almost never calls Himself the Son of God. That is not to say that Jesus does not present His deity. He does, and in many ways. I'm not going to take the time to trace that out here, but if you ever hear someone say that Jesus did not claim to be God, that is wrong. That is heresy. The title Son of Man was an exalted title. Let me read to you from Daniel 7:13-14.

- 13 I saw *another spectacle* in the night visions:  
I looked and saw someone like a son of man  
coming with the clouds of heaven.<sup>[a]</sup>  
He approached the Ancient of Days  
and was ushered into His presence.
- 14 To Him was given authority, honor, and a kingdom  
so that all people of every heritage, nationality, and  
language might serve Him.  
His dominion will last forever,  
*His throne* will never pass away,  
and His kingdom will never be destroyed.  
—The Voice Bible

In Acts 6 Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews. In chapter 7 Stephen addressed these men. We read in Acts 7:55-56 the following words:

<sup>55</sup> But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

In the very next verse, we are told the reaction of those Jewish leaders: "But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then, they cast him out of the city and stoned him." These powerful men did not have that reaction because Stephen referred to Jesus as a mere man. He presented Jesus as the Son of God even though he didn't use that term.

So, in today's text, Jesus was not asking the man He had healed if he believed that Jesus was human. He was saying, "I am the Christ. I am the promised One. I am the Son of God. Do you believe in Me?"

Look at the man's answer in v. 38.

All of us are like the man in this story because all of us are born blind. If we have the sight to recognize Jesus for who He really is, it is because He gave us sight. But those who simply pretend they have sight, they are kept in darkness.

The actor Peter Falk assumed many roles during his long career, but he is best known for his portrayal of the rumpled, eccentric, but brilliant detective Columbo. I was surprised to learn that in real life, Falk had a glass eye. When he was 3-years-old, he had an operation to remove one eye due to cancer. Despite his missing eye, he was a high school athlete. He enjoyed telling the story about the time he was playing baseball and was called out at third base. According to Falk, he approached the umpire, removed his eye, and as he handed it to the umpire, he said, "You'll do better with this."

All of us are blind. If you have placed your trust in Jesus, you can't pat yourself on the back, and that is because He has given you something better than a glass eye. His Holy Spirit has enabled you to see with clarity who Jesus really is.

Do you know that He is your Savior, that you have truly placed your faith and trust in Him?

### **We Need to Know Jesus is Our Great Shepherd**

We will not conclude at the end of John 9 because Jesus continued His conversation with the Pharisees on into chapter 10. We will stop at v. 5, but the story really continues on until v. 21. Let's read vv. 1-5. Let's go ahead and add v. 6 because it emphasizes the religious leaders were blind to truth.

Jesus tells a story about a shepherd and his sheep. He also talks about a door to the sheep. In the ancient world, at night a shepherd would often gather his sheep into some kind of enclosure. It might be a natural enclosure like a cave. It might be a man-made one such as a fence. Regardless, the shepherd would lie down at the entrance to the enclosure. Nothing could get in or out except by going over him. The shepherd was the door to the sheep.

The application of the story is clear even though it went over the head of Jesus' critics. Jesus is the shepherd. God's people are the sheep. The thieves and robbers who try to get to the sheep by climbing over the fence rather than going through the door are false teachers. Those religious leaders to whom Jesus spoke were thieves and robbers.

Jesus claimed to be both the door and the Shepherd. Look at vv. 7-8 and 11.

Shepherding is not commonly practiced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century here in America. I have never heard a kid say, "I want to be a shepherd when I grow up." Shepherding was commonplace in Israel, and had been practiced for many, many centuries. The people of that day would have been able to relate to the metaphor Jesus used.

What do shepherds do? They feed the sheep. They lead the sheep. They guard the sheep. They care for the sheep. That is what Jesus does for us.

I am going to be blunt and coarse, but hear me out. Don't feed your mind and soul on the crap the world offers because that is what it is. Most of what you can read and watch is worse than junk food. It will not nurture your mind and soul. Let the Spirit of Jesus lead you to nutritious food that will lead to spiritual health.

Let the Spirit of Jesus lead and guide you in the decisions you make and the path you take. We often ask children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” That is a terrible question. We should ask, “What do you think God wants you to be when you grow up?” If you belong to Him, it is His decision, not yours.

Let Jesus guard you. You and I have a common enemy. He is cunning, and he is ruthless, and he wants to take us out. Our enemy does not play by the rules. He goes after children, and the weak, and those whom he views as easy pickings. When he knocks on your door, this is what you need to do. Ask Jesus to answer the door.

Finally, let Jesus care for you. No one gets through this life uninjured. Let Jesus patch you up and care for your wounds. I don’t know why we don’t sing it, but there is a hymn in our hymnal the title of which is, “There Is a Balm in Gilead.” Here is the chorus:

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;  
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

The psalm is based on Jeremiah 8:22 where the weeping prophet asks mournfully, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored.” Jesus is our physician, and He is your cure. Let him restore you to full, spiritual health.

His name was John. He died at the age of 82. Even though he had failing eyesight, he was still preaching when he died. He knew he had a failing memory. He once said, “Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.”

John had not always been a follower of Jesus. His mother was a devout believer and sought to instill Christian values into her son, but she died when John was 7, and he was left with his irreligious, seafaring father. John was pressed into naval service against his will when he was 18. According to John’s biographer, “The companions he met with here completed the ruin of his principles.” John Piper wrote that he became a debauched sailor. I won’t go into all the trials he faced, but as a young man he became the captain of a slave-trading ship.

In time, he was gloriously saved. He became a pastor at 39 and remained one until his death. When he was 47, he wrote a particular hymn. It was just one of the hundreds he wrote, but you know it, and you have sung it many times. “Amazing Grace” was the testimony of John Newton. I pray that it is or will become yours.