

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: John 9:1-41**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

A man born blind, and a healing that placed the authorities at risk: How does the way we look at things affect our capacity to see?

**Theme: Searching for Sight**

**Before:** Gather an assortment of objects such as a set of child's wooden blocks, or several bright-colored plastic Easter eggs, even a batch of small plastic juice cups, which you can hide in plain sight around the room. Also gather things like a small stuffed animal in a paper grocery bag, a bell, and even a cell phone. The point is to invite the children to experience how we find out about things by seeing, by feeling, and by hearing. Obviously, if you have a blind child in your class, you will need to supplement the seeing things with hearing and feeling things. You will also need a bright sheet of construction paper for each child and some white chalk.

**Beginning:** Say to the children something like this: I think there are seven bright Easter eggs (or 8 wooden blocks, or whatever you have brought and hid) in funny places in this room. I think you can find them. If you see one, get up and go get it and then come back and sit down until everyone has found one. When all the items have been found, ask the children to put them in the center of the table, perhaps in a box or a basket.

**Praying:** Thank you, God, for all the things we can see with our eyes. Amen.

**The Story:** This is a story about a man who could not see. He had never been able to see. Even when he was a tiny baby, he could not see. His parents loved him and took care of him, but there were some things he could not do. Jesus saw that the man could not see and decided to fix that. He did something strange. Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with his spit, and put that on the man's eyes. Then he told the man to go wash his face in the water. The man did what he was told and when he dried off his face, he could see. Wow! He looked up at the birds in the trees, and down at the little ants crawling on the ground. He could see all of this. The other grown-ups argued with each other, "How did this happen? Are we sure this is the same man?" "How come you can see?" they asked the man. He said, "I don't know what happened. I could not see, but someone fixed it so I can see." Jesus went looking for the man. The man said, "I wish I knew who it was that healed me." "I was the one," Jesus told the man. Now the man believed in Jesus.

**Activity: Different ways of seeing**

Gather what you have brought. To help the children become aware that we can figure some things out without being able to see, offer the stuffed animal in the grocery paper bag. Ask the children, one by one, to reach in, touch it, and see if they can figure out what is in the bag. Ask them to describe what they feel (soft, furry, etc.) Then when all have guessed, bring the creature out for all to see. If time permits, you could do the same thing with a paper bag containing other items such as a toothbrush, a comb, a baby's pacifier, or a spoon; whatever was handy as you gathered supplies. Ask the children to reach in, feel the items, and figure out what they are touching. Then, pour the items out on the table, so they can see what they were feeling.

**Option:** If time permits, use this suggestion. Tell the children to form a big circle — with room to reach out arms in all directions without touching anyone. Then, ask one child to say: "I can see, follow me!" and then lead the children through some motion: (Run in a circle until we are all back at the place where we began. Hop on one foot. (Any Simon Says type motions). Keep going until each child has had the chance to lead the group.

**Activity:** Give each child a piece of bright colored construction paper and pieces of white chalk. Tell them that our Gratitude Pictures today will be created using these materials. Ask one child to hold up the piece of construction paper and ask the rest of the children to call out what color it is. Each child, in turn, can hold up their piece of paper and the others can name its color. Ask the children how we know what color the pieces of paper are? Yes, we can see them. Ask the children to draw something that makes them glad.

**Getting Closure:** Ask if any of the children want to talk about their Gratitude Picture. Share yours also.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for all the wonderful things you have created for us to see. Amen.

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

**Scripture: John 9:1-41**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

A man born blind, and a healing that placed the authorities at risk: How does the way we look at things affect our capacity to see?

**Theme: Searching for Sight**

**Before Class:** Today's passage is long, so you will need to decide how you want to read the scripture. Depending on the reading level of your group, you could read the part of the narrator and ask for volunteers for the parts. There is a script below. Another option is to read verses 1-12 and 35-43, summarizing what happens in the middle. The goal would be for the children to actually read as much of the passage as possible and still have time within your class period to turn this into a news story.

You will need copies of the script and if you do the "Blindness" activity, you will need a blindfold and a bag with random objects in it for the children to try to guess. Think of unique objects they may not see in the classroom such as sculptures, toys, sports equipment, etc.

**Beginning:** Ask the children how we would know that today is Sunday, if we did not have a calendar. What is different about Sunday? (We come to church, the Sunday paper, different type programs on TV.)

Ask the children what they know about the word Sabbath? (A time of resting from work, spending time with God, etc.) If they do not already know this, tell them that when Jesus was teaching, there were very strict rules about what one could do and what one could not do on the Sabbath. If time permits, ask them if they know where we got these rules? (Genesis 2:2-4)

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, that you help us to see what we are to do in your world. Amen.

**The Story: John 9: 1-41** Present the scripture according to the option you have chosen.

**Option:** If you are going to paraphrase verses 13-34, here is a suggestion. Three things are going on here. First, the Pharisees job was to make sure people followed the rules so they could be **sure** they were doing what God wanted them to do. The things Jesus was doing were very scary to them. The second thing is a man who has never seen anything, is suddenly able to see

and delighting in what he was seeing. This man had **no clue** who had healed him and probably had not noticed that all this had happened on a Sabbath, when people were not supposed to be doing any work. He was just happy to be able to see. The third thing that is going on is the parents of the blind man. Of course, they are thrilled that he can now see, but they are also afraid of getting in trouble with the leaders of their church, so they are keeping as low a profile as they can.

### Questions:

- Who is it that, at the beginning of the story, is blind and cannot see? (The man born blind.)
- Who is it that has perfect eyesight, and yet cannot see? (The Pharisees.)
- Who are the Pharisees and what is it that they cannot see? (Pharisees worked hard to make sure people obeyed all the rules of their religion, but they could not see who Jesus was the fulfillment of the law)
- What did Jesus do to fix the blind man's eyes? (Verses 6-7)
- What was the Big Problem for the Pharisees in this healing? (Jesus did it on the Sabbath and they were sure that God's Law given to them by Moses was broken.)
- I wonder why the parents of the man born blind afraid to admit that their son has been healed? (They were afraid they would be tossed out of their church as followers of Jesus and they did not want that to happen.)
- What is the response of the man who now can see? (He was not able to see Jesus when Jesus put the mud on his eyes, so he did not know who he was. Maybe with all the furor, he is beginning to suspect that Jesus is someone special.)
- How does Jesus help the man see who he is? (Verses 35-38.)

### Activities:

**Television Show:** Invite the children to decide what television format they will use to tell this story: News show, late night show, or whatever they choose. Give them time to decide who will play which part and then produce the show for you. Be available as a consultant, if they need your help.

**Blindness:** Is there someone in your congregation or in your community who is blind that could come talk to the children about their experience?

As a way for the children to understand in a small way what it would be like to be blind, invite them to guess what objects are after they have been blindfolded. One at a time, blindfold a child and hand them an object that has been hidden in the bag. They can feel it, they can ask questions of the other children to get hints, but they have to try to guess.

After everyone has gotten a turn, invite them to reflect on what it was like to not be able to see when others could. Invite them to talk about their experience.

**Getting Closure:** Ask the children if they can think of a time we might say, "Oh, I see!" when we really mean, "Now, I understand!" Have they had that experience with a tough math problem? How about figuring out how to use some program on the computer? What else can they think of?

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for those “ah ha!” moments, when we say: “I see!!” Amen.

## **John 9:1-41**

**Narrator:** As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him,

**Disciples:** ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’

**Jesus:** Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’

**Narrator:** When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him,

**Jesus:** ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’

**Narrator:** (which means Sent) Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,

**Neighbors:** ‘Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?’

**Narrator:** Some were saying, ‘It is he.’ Others were saying, ‘No, but it is someone like him.’ But the man kept saying,

**Blind Man:** ‘I am the man.’

**Neighbors:** ‘Then how were your eyes opened?’

**Blind Man:** ‘The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, “Go to Siloam and wash.” Then I went and washed and received my sight.’

**Neighbors:** ‘Where is he?’

**Blind Man:** ‘I do not know.’

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**Narrator:** They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them,

**Blind Man:** ‘He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.’

**Narrator:** Some of the Pharisees said,

**Pharisees (Group 1):** ‘This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.’

**Narrators:** But others said,

**Pharisees (Group 2):** ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’

**Narrator:** And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man,

**Pharisees (all):** ‘What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.’

**Blind Man:** ‘He is a prophet.’

**Narrator:** The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight<sup>19</sup> and asked them,

**Pharisees:** ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?’

**Narrator:** His parents answered,

**Parents:** ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.’

**Narrator:** His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him,

**Pharisees:** ‘Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.’

**Blind Man:** ‘I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’

**Pharisees:** ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’

**Blind Man:** ‘I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?’

**Narrator:** Then they reviled him, saying,

**Pharisees:** ‘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 comes from.’

**Blind Man:** ‘Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’

**Pharisees:** ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’

**Narrator:** And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’<sup>36</sup> He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.’<sup>38</sup> He said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshipped him.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, ‘I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’<sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, ‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see”, your sin remains.

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
**Gospel Lesson for Adults**

**Scripture: John 9:1-41**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week’s Gospel**

A man born blind, and a healing that placed the authorities at risk: How does the way we look at things affect our capacity to see?

**Theme: Searching for Sight**

**Before Class:** Make sure to have enough copies of the scripture for today for everyone to read. The reading is long, so it will be easier for people to have a copy they can either write on or paper on which to take notes as they follow along in their Bibles.

**Beginning:** Invite the group to consider this statement: How does our ability to look at things affect our ability to see? How did the Pharisees see the observance of the Sabbath? (For the origins of that concept, see Genesis 2:2-3.) Invite the group to notice both what people can see and what they are unable to see in this passage and be thinking of times we can see and times we cannot.

**Opening Prayer:** We pray, God, for eyes to see what you call us to notice. Amen.

**The Scripture. John 9:1-41** Describe to the group the method you have selected for reading this passage and then ask for volunteers to read the parts.

**Questions:**

- (Briefly) I wonder what stood out for you in this passage?

**Verses 1-12**

- To what extent do you think the disciples’ question (verse 2b) catalyzed Jesus’ decision to heal the man born blind? (Perhaps he realized that it would create “cognitive dissonance” for the Pharisees and maybe even help them see.)
- I wonder why Jesus chose this method of healing? (Spittle was considered to have medicinal value.)
- Contemporary medicine has within its bag of competencies surgery that can cure some forms of blindness, so a person regaining sight might be less of a startling revelation for us than it was for the man’s neighbors. How do we think we might respond if we discovered that a person who had been missing a limb, suddenly had that limb?

- Why doesn't the man "know" who healed him? (The man had been unable to "see" Jesus when Jesus healed him.)

### **Verses 13-23**

- Track the path the Pharisees take to try to disprove either that this healing took place, or that it took place on a Sabbath so the breaking of the rule trumps the event.
- Who do they interrogate first? (The man who has received his sight.)
- What about the man's testimony puts them on the spot? (Verse 16)
- What do they do next in hopes of finding an answer they can live with? (They interview the man's terrified parents.)
- I wonder why the parents so afraid of these questions? (Verse 22)
- What is their creative solution to these compromising questions? (Verse 23b)

### **Verses 24-34**

- Notice the mounting frustration of the Pharisees as they attempt to trap the man who now can see, and his ability to sidestep the questions. What do the Pharisees do to try to trap the man who now can see? (Verse 24b)
- How does the man switch the focus? (Verse 25)
- Notice the apparent growth of the man's faith as he is badgered by the questions. (Verse 33)

### **Verses 35-41**

- Notice the contrast between the Pharisees' and Jesus' gentle line of questions to the man. What is happening to the man in verses 35 to 38? (Jesus' questions allow the man to "see" for himself who Jesus is.)
- Describe how Jesus' concluding remarks to the Pharisees clarify who it is that sees and who is now blind. (Verses 39b-41)

**Getting Closure:** Invite the group to consider times we have been blind and later could see. For example, at one point in our history our church was blind to the injustices of segregation and now few would argue that African Americans should attend separate schools from others. Where else has blindness opened to seeing? Then, invite the group to sit in silence: to be still and know that God is.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for invitations to see. Help us to see things anew each day, seeing people how you see people. Amen.

## **John 9:1-41**

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**Disciples:** ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’

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