

THE SIGN OF HIS LIGHT

Leader pages on pp. 122-125

THE POINT:
ONLY THROUGH JESUS
CAN WE TRULY SEE.

JOHN 9:1-11, 30-33

¹ As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth.
² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him."
⁴ We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work.
⁵ **As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**
.....
⁶ After he said these things he spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes.
⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So he left, washed, and came back seeing.
⁸ His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit begging?"
⁹ Some said, "He's the one." Others were saying, "No, but he looks like him." He kept saying, "I'm the one."
¹⁰ So they asked him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"
¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So when I went and washed I received my sight."
.....
³⁰ "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes."
³¹ We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him.
³² Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind.
³³ If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything."

MEMORY VERSE

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KEYWORDS

Rabbi (v. 2)—The English word is a translation of the Greek word *rabbi* and means master or teacher.

Night is coming (v. 4)—In the ancient world night mean it was impossible to work as the normal day shut down. The night comes at some point and cancels opportunities to serve.

Pool of Siloam (v. 7)—Introduced in 2 Kings 20:20 as King Hezekiah's public works project to bring water inside the gates of Jerusalem.

God-fearing (v. 31)—God-fearing doesn't mean terror, but reverence for God. The Greek uses a compound word composed of "God" and "worship" or "devout."

HOW DOES JESUS REVEAL HIMSELF AS THE TRUE LIGHT?

Thomas Wiggins was a talented Black American pianist and composer from the 19th century, known for his extraordinary skill on the piano. Born blind and into slavery in Georgia, Thomas, also possibly autistic, was bought by the wealthy Bethune family. He wasn't made to do typical slave labor due to his disability, and it wasn't long before General James Neil Bethune noticed Thomas's innate talent for music.

Due to his young age, status as a slave, and his emotional vulnerability, Thomas was particularly at risk. Despite these challenges, he grew to become one of the most sought-after musicians in America. Renowned writers like Mark Twain and

John Steinbeck attended his performances and documented his life and work. His talent was so impressive that by the age of 11, he was invited to play at the White House by President Buchanan. During the Civil War, he even created a piece called "The Battle of Manassas," capturing the sounds of a battle through music. Thomas Wiggins passed away in 1908 in Hoboken, New Jersey. His musical brilliance and significant contributions remain undeniable.

There are some who look at disabilities as being a hindrance. Then there are some who see it as just experiencing the world differently. In today's session, we're going to see a blind man who was hindered not by himself but by the society in which he lived. Yet, Jesus was going to use this man's disability to show a more profound condition, not of the man, but of the society surrounding him. Of course, true blindness occurs when we miss seeing who Jesus truly is!

Jesus Is the Light We Need //

John 9:1-5

This passage begins with Jesus walking with His disciples by a man born blind from birth (v. 1). In the first century, there were no social services provided to assist the blind, so the man wasn't able to perform work like other people; therefore, he was relegated to a life of begging in order to provide financial support.

The disciples then asked a question that engaged Jesus concerning this man specifically, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v. 2). In other words, "Who do we blame for this disability, Jesus?" Returning to a first-century mindset, the Jewish people believed that any disability would have been a punishment for sin. Perhaps they were thinking of Scriptures that referenced how the curse of sin would be passed down to the next generation (Ex. 20:5; Deut. 28:15). Jesus made it clear, however, that their interpretation was faulty.



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Jesus provides an immediate correction of the view expressed concerning the purpose of this man's blindness. It wasn't a result of sin but for the glory of God (v. 3). This teaching can be hard to accept when we look at why, but it's essential in understanding the true nature of Jesus Christ and the way His work points to who He is. The real blindness and more damaging issue were concerning those who couldn't see the purpose of God's work among them (v. 4). Furthermore, a great blindness that exists today is from those who believe that by having a disability, they have been excluded or hindered from receiving the blessing of God. Paul looked at his own personal weakness (perhaps a sight issue) as being a reason to boast and glorify God even more (2 Cor. 12:9-10). In fact, it took him seeing the presence of his "thorn in the flesh" (v. 7) to give him greater strength in the Lord!

The culmination of the discussion in these verses connects Jesus's two "I am" statements (John 8:12; John 9:5) emphasizing that He is the light of the world. In John 8, Jesus interacted with the Pharisees, who questioned His authority and divinity. In John 9, He showed His disciples the urgency needed for Jesus to reveal Himself as the light to the world, because He could see that the days were coming soon when His earthly ministry would be finished. And they would need to reflect His light.

In our modern culture, our work certainly isn't finished as the body of Christ until Jesus returns. Therefore, it's great to see when the church supports and ministers to families that have someone with a disability or require special attention. The support can look different in each situation. Your church may build wheelchair ramps for those with physical handicaps or provide a respite night for parents of children with special needs. Whatever opportunities present themselves, may we definitely not push those individuals or families aside. One lesson we can draw from Jesus here is to see people with disabilities and have compassion for them as a way to be the hands and feet of Christ to them, even as we address the deeper spiritual needs.

AND HOW DOES HIS REPLY TO THE DISCIPLES HELP US VIEW SUFFERING DIFFERENTLY?

Jesus Opens Our Eyes to See // John 9:6-11

The time for Jesus to not just declare that He is the light of the world but to show it to this blind man and to His disciples was about to occur. Up to this point, the man's life was defined by darkness. The very concept of light was foreign to his understanding. And yet, the One who created light was about to give the ability for this man to experience light and see the Light all at one time!



DIGGING DEEPER BLIND

In the New Testament, people who were blind weren't automatically considered cursed, but their condition often sparked a range of reactions and beliefs from others. Sometimes, blindness was seen as a misfortune or a consequence of sin. For instance, in John 9:1-3, when Jesus meets a man who was born blind, His disciples ask, "Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" This question shows a common belief of that era that physical issues were caused by sin. However, Jesus challenges this notion by explaining, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned... but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." This response shows that Jesus didn't see blindness or other disabilities as curses; instead, He saw them as opportunities to demonstrate God's power through healing and compassion.

Can you see how addressing physical blindness can help us understand spiritual blindness?



Rather than just declaring for the man to receive his sight, Jesus continued to let this man be an illustration to the disciples and the man himself of His work and authority. Therefore, when Jesus began to mix the clay and the mud together and rub it on the man's eyes (v. 6), He wasn't just using some "life hack" in order to remove blindness. The Jewish medical journal surely wouldn't have endorsed this method to cure blindness. It's easy in our culture today to put the focus on the clay and mud instead of the Healer. Instead, the mud was going to be both symbolic, as well as a call to action.

So, when Jesus finished putting the mud on the blind man's eyes, He called the man to respond in faith: "'Go . . . wash in the pool of Siloam (which means 'Sent')" (v. 7a). The actions and words left such an impression that John wanted to remind the readers of the definition of the name of the place. This reference points back to not only a place but to a purpose. The purpose of Jesus's coming was that He was sent by the Father to complete God's mission (John 8:42). Furthermore, the blind man's response showed his faith and obedience. It took faith for the man to trust in the method that Jesus was going to use to restore his sight. The blind man's faith was affirmed when he "left, washed, and came back seeing" (John 9:7b).

Such was the restoration of this man's sight and proclamation of being healed of blindness that people had a hard time recognizing him (vv. 8-9). The total transformation brought even more

individuals who were curious (v. 10). The response of being healed explicitly by Jesus is one we should all remember, because it calls us to share in the same testimony. This man truly understood his life before he met Jesus, how Jesus changed his life, and his new life in Christ. However, it's important to understand that this man was never going to live in blindness again. Sure, he was going to sin. His eyes were going to be exposed to things that he had never seen before. And his obedience was to be a lifestyle, not just a one-time event.

When we look at why Jesus placed the focus on Himself in this interaction about physical and spiritual blindness, we have to recognize that Jesus didn't need to even address the cause of the blindness; He wanted to extend grace no matter the cause. Faith believes in who Jesus is and what He can do. Then we can share our testimony of the transforming power that Jesus makes in our lives, no matter what circumstances we face or how we may stumble in our lives. Jesus is the One who makes us see things clearly.

WHEN HAS JESUS MADE YOU SEE THINGS IN A WHOLE NEW WAY?

The Work of Jesus Points to Who He Is // John 9:30-33

The man receiving his sight totally rocked the world of the Pharisees and the crowd of people who witnessed his unexplainable transformation. But it wasn't just a physical transformation that took place; the man received spiritual sight as well. The man's testimony, both physically and spiritually, made such an impact that the Pharisees pulled him aside to question him (vv. 15-17, 24-29); they even brought in his parents to testify whether he was genuinely blind or not (vv. 19-23). The Pharisees' interrogation caused more confusion, and the confusion didn't lead them to explore who Jesus is; instead, they used it as a means of persecuting anyone who followed Jesus.

- **There was confusion about where Jesus was from (v. 30).**
- **There was confusion about how the miracle was performed (v. 32).**

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- **There was confusion about the nature of the One who performed the miracle (v. 33).**

Persecution was going to be their way to try and discard the testimony of the former blind man. The Pharisees pointed again to the way the man was prior to meeting Christ, and in their eyes, nothing had changed (vv. 31,34). Their response became physical to the point of casting him out from the temple area, the place he wasn't allowed to worship in since birth due to his disability.

Later, we see that Jesus found the man after being deemed an outcast and showed him the true nature of who He is (vv. 35-38). When Jesus asks him if he believes, Jesus confirms, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind" (v. 39). The confirmation of his belief led not to returning to a temple to worship but to a face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ, God Himself! May we be more like the blind man who gained sight, rather than the seeing Pharisees who were actually blind!

HOW HAS JESUS'S INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE HELPED YOU GET TO KNOW HIM BETTER?

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the leading cause of blindness in African Americans is glaucoma? According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness in African Americans. Glaucoma is an eye condition in which increased pressure in the eye causes damage to the optic nerve, leading to vision loss. If left untreated, it can result in blindness. Early detection and treatment are crucial to managing the condition and preserving vision. Glaucoma affects nearly 67 million people around the world. This eye disease leads to vision loss because of high pressure inside the eye. African Americans are five times more likely to develop glaucoma and, according to a new study, are six times more likely to go blind from it. Because glaucoma often isn't noticed until it has progressed to the point of irreversible vision loss, early testing and detection are essential to prevent permanent vision loss.⁸

Biblical Truth: It is possible to have sight and still be blind until Christ opens our eyes.

Like glaucoma, how can we detect early signs of spiritual blindness?

LIVE IT

What steps can you take to ensure you're following Christ and being an inspiration to others?

Jesus Christ makes us see things clearly. If you're trying to live in line with His teachings, it's all about keeping it real and staying true to His Word. You have to read the Bible, pray often, and try to live out the truths of God's word every day. Show love like Jesus did—help people out, be there for people, and forgive when someone messes up. Treat everyone with respect, no matter who they are, and let your actions speak louder than words. In doing so, the love of Christ shining through you.

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- **Obey.** Consider areas that may be blind spots for you. Ask God to make you aware, so you can obey and for accountability from a group member to help you grow in this particular area.
- **Testify.** Share your personal testimony of your life before Christ, how you came to trust Christ, and your life since with someone who isn't a believer. After all, once you were blind, but now you see!
- **Serve.** Spend some time considering how you can engage and support families or individuals who are disabled or have a handicap. Show the love of Jesus as your Savior did!

DAILY READINGS

1. HE'S AN EYE OPENER // JOHN 9: 10-11

Jesus and his disciples see a blind man. Jesus responds that the man's disability is not the result of his or his parents' sin. He then explains this has happened so that God's work is displayed in him. So, he spits on the ground and makes mud from saliva and spreads it on the man's eyes. Then, he tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man leaves, washes, and returns able to see. The neighbors contemplate if he is the same man although he keeps saying he is the one. They inquire how his eyes were opened, and he recalls the events as they happened. Although this text speaks of physical eyes, God also has the power to open our spiritual eyes if we let Him.

"The LORD opens the eyes of the blind. . ."
(Ps. 146:8).

2. JUST BELIEVE // MARK 10: 51-52

"Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" As Jesus, his disciples, and a large crowd leave Jericho, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, sits by the road. When he hears that it is Jesus of Nazareth, he cries these words. Jesus stops and tells his disciples to call him. They call him and tell him to have courage and get up because Jesus is calling for him. Bartimaeus throws off his coat, jumps up, and comes to Jesus. Jesus asks the man what he wants to do for him in which he replies, "I want to see." Jesus tells him to go; his faith has saved him. Immediately he sees and begins to follow Jesus on the road.

Savior, help me to have faith in You and Your ability.

3. WALK IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PRESENCE // PSALM 89:15

In His presence is the blessed place. Each day we must choose to remember who He is and what He has done. The psalmist opens the chapter by choosing to sing about the Lord's faithful love forever to generations to come. He recalls the Lord's words of making a covenant with His chosen one, swearing an oath to David to establish

his offspring forever. Then, he praises the Lord, citing that no one is like him. He adores him for his creations, mighty arm, and powerful hand. This verse highlights that the one who praises Him publicly is happy, walking in the light of His presence. Today, recall the Lord's greatness and faithfulness.

Walk in the light of His presence by making a joyful shout.

4. ETERNAL LIFE IN THE SON // 1 JOHN 5:11

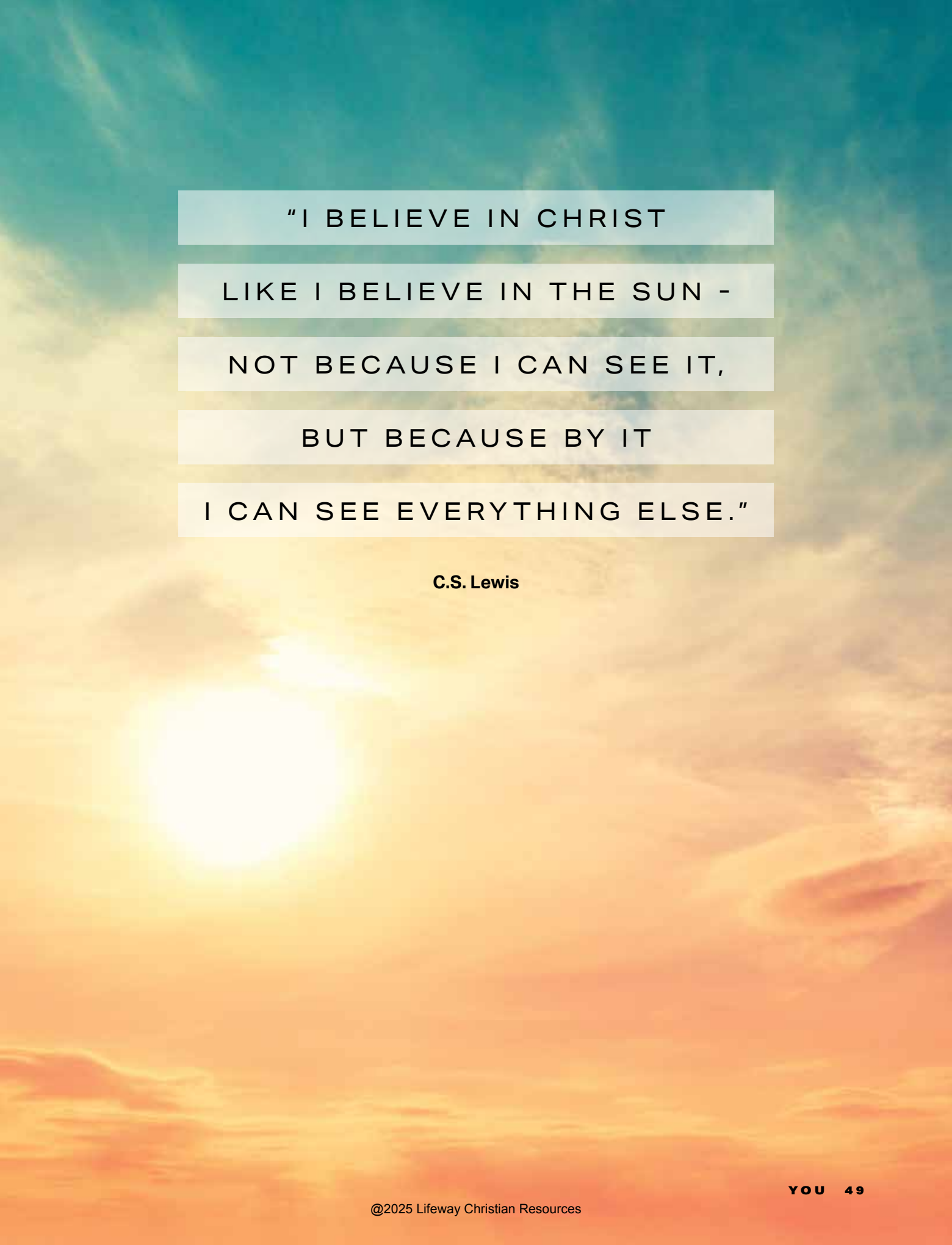
It's a truth we hate to admit. We dance around it. We don't talk about it. This world is not our home. The good news is that as believers, we have life after death. The context that surrounds this passage lets us know that Jesus Christ is the one who came by water and blood, and the Spirit is the one who testifies. The Spirit is truth, and three testify: the Spirit, water, and blood – all in agreement. It further details that God's testimony about the Son is greater than man's testimony, and one must believe the testimony God has given about his Son. The testimony: God has given us eternal life in His Son.

Let us be grateful for the gift of the Savior, who provides us with everlasting life.

5. PASS THE GOSPEL // 1 CORINTHIANS 15: 3-4

When was the last time you shared the gospel? It's not a suggestion; it's a command. Therefore, we should view The Great Commission as a responsibility. Not the responsibility of pastors, ministers, and the like. But our responsibility, the responsibility of all Christians. Paul speaks to the church at Corinth, reminding them of the gospel that he preached to them. He admonishes them to hold fast to this message, for this is how they are saved. Otherwise, they have believed in vain. He informs them that he has passed down what he has received. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day as outlined in the Scriptures.

The gospel has been given to us, we have a responsibility to pass it on.



"I BELIEVE IN CHRIST
LIKE I BELIEVE IN THE SUN -
NOT BECAUSE I CAN SEE IT,
BUT BECAUSE BY IT
I CAN SEE EVERYTHING ELSE."

C.S. Lewis



Strategies for Christ-Centered Teaching

BY CHRISTINA ZIMMERMAN

Centered living is the desire of many health enthusiasts in today's culture. It encourages mental exercises for health and wellness from the inside out. However, it's not easy to be centered in today's culture. To be centered means being focused or able to live one's life with intentionality. Our focus is consistently pulled to the many personalities, events, opinions, and so forth that stream through social media and on our electronic devices.

For anyone who may be seeking to learn being centered is essential. A learner must be able to apply oneself with intentionality to learning. The same is true for a teacher, but the teacher

must also focus on developing an expertise in the subject matter so that learners receive a thorough cognitive and affective transference of knowledge. This means that teachers must be a step ahead of the learner in what needs to be made known. If a teacher does not teach from this position, it's like a driver trying to reach a destination from the backseat of a car.

These principals apply even more so to the Christian teacher who must not only be focused on the content of the lesson, but must also be centered in Christ. Teaching that is Christ centered focuses on the whole life of believers through concepts that are rooted in one



important person—Christ Himself. Here are strategies for being a Christ-centered teacher.

Focus on Christ

Christ-centered teaching must focus on the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus should be front and center no matter what the biblical lesson may be about and no matter what the Scripture reference may be. Actually, the whole Bible is about Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, if reference is not made directly about Him, He is alluded to, experienced, prophesied about, present in some form, and allegorized, along with many other ways Jesus is revealed throughout the Bible.

Therefore, Jesus should always be the protagonist of any biblical lesson or story. He is the main topic, He is the hero, He is the One whom God wants us to grow up to be like. The Bible reveals, “We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Over and over in his writing, Paul speaks of the “riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8) as the inexhaustible content of biblical lessons—whether preached or taught.

Christian believers need Jesus in our lives. Paul said Jesus is at the center of everything: “For

everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16-17). When He is the center of everything, He becomes everything to those who follow Him. He is Lord and Savior. He is the “way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In Jesus “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The Bible presents an inexhaustible way Jesus is everything to the believer.

Share What Christ Has Done

Not only should teachers focus on the person of Christ, but they should focus on His works. The incarnate Jesus fulfilled a mission while He was on earth. He spoke part of His mission at the beginning of His three-year ministry. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jesus summed up the other part of His mission when He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live” (John 11:25).

All who follow Christ will never die because we believe in Him. Teachers should talk about the miracles of Jesus. They should talk about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. They should share about how Jesus has fulfilled His mission in their own lives. What did Jesus do to bring about their salvation? What was life like before Christ? How did Jesus change one’s world? This is sharing the gospel which Christ commanded us to do before His ascension to heaven. He said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

When we share what Jesus has done, we make it real for those who may not know Christ.



They can see the power of Christ at work in the lives of teachers and be moved to seek Him for themselves.

Be the Lesson that Is Taught

Christ-centered teaching also includes a necessity for teachers to live godly and righteously. This kind of living is not taught exclusively from a book. It requires that the Christian teacher is deeply committed to Christ in absolute surrender.

When teachers are absolutely surrendered to Christ, they will look noticeably different from the rest of the world. That's because the totality of who they are has been placed under the lordship of Jesus. Many who follow Christ believe that they have entrusted Jesus as Lord, but they continue to exemplify worldliness. They embrace sin, brag about sin, and support sinful lifestyles. They follow Christ because of what they think it offers—wealth, success, and all the things dreams are made of. When learners see this lifestyle in their Christian teachers, they may resolve to do the same as their teachers.

This is not what Jesus wants for us. Teachers should be surrendered deeply to Christ so that their actions cause learners difficulty in differentiating where the line of Jesus begins and ends in the life of the teacher.

Christ-Centered Teaching

Christ-centered teaching requires that teachers focus most if not all lessons on Christ, be transparent as they share the life and works of Christ, and live as Jesus lived when He was on earth. The result will be transformed and empowered learners who will grow to live Christ-centered lives, despite the geological, political, social, and personal calamities that are occurring daily in our culture.

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