

# Our Journey of Faith

*Based on John 9*

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## INTRODUCTION

In a very real sense, we are all born "blind."

We are born without knowledge

without the gift of intellectual "sight"

without understanding how the world works

But then the Lord gifts us with "sight."

We start acquiring knowledge, lots of it

and the eyes of our understanding are opened

we learn how to process information

make sense of it

draw conclusions and develop theories

we learn how to think rationally

and do uniquely human things like

laugh

smile

talk

invent

calculate

plan

anticipate a future for ourselves

The gospel of John records the remarkable account of a man born blind receiving sight from the Lord.

But what happens *next* is even more astonishing

It shows the formerly blind man's process of discovery as he moves from thinking Jesus

is merely a man,  
to thinking He must be some sort of prophet  
to realizing He must be from God or be God!

This process of discovery happens under extreme duress

the Pharisees engage in a ruthless all-out assault,  
with the goal of discrediting him and the Lord's miracle

but their strategy backfires.

their attack only *strengthens* the man's resolve to decide for himself who Jesus really is.

## **THE CHALLENGE**

This account from John Chapter 9 presents an "accelerated" version of our own faith journey...

Our journey of faith tends to be slower.

It tends to meander, and wanders in the direction of dead ends

We find that we have questions, need time to think...

Take the teachings of our church, the Writings.

Are they the work of a man, Emanuel Swedenborg?  
The work of a prophet?

Or are they from God?

As adults, we begin with what we're taught by the church: that these books are Divine Revelation, from God Himself.

These teachings open our eyes...

They give us incredible sight, intellectual sight, a powerful vision of heaven, hell, the life of faith and charity, marriage, a life of use

But we must *still* decide for ourselves...

**...what kind of power, authority, to give these teachings**

**...do they have the power to save us from our fallen condition?**

**...do they have the power to change the way we think and feel?**

Our faith needs time to grow and mature...

It shouldn't be rushed...

We need to make it our own

...before we fall on our knees and say, "*Lord, I believe!*" (v. 38)

Now, obviously, we can't put our faith on hold - we need to live the precepts of our religion. We need to live lives of integrity to the best of our ability, each and every day.

- of course, this is what we do

**But what we're talking about here is our SOURCE of truth**

**When "push comes to shove," who or what is the final AUTHORITY in our lives?**

**When our faith is tested, and tested to the core, who or what do we turn to?**

We, our children, our friends, the neighbor down the street - *everyone* either already has an answer to this question, or is working on one!

## WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

One of the deep, underlying narratives in the Gospels is the gradual "unveiling" of the Lord's identity...

The New Testament reveals a *process* of people "discovering" who Jesus really is:

Gospel of Matthew:

*"[Jesus] asked His disciples saying, "Who do people say I am?" So they said, some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets..."*

"Jesus said to them...

**...but who do you say that I am?"**

Peter: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."*  
(Matthew 16:16)

To which the Lord replies, *"You are Peter, and on this Rock I will build My church!"*

CHRIST = KING (You are the final authority)

Other incidents:

At the end of the Lord's ministry, when the Lord predicts that His disciples will abandon Him...

Peter says: *"To whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life?"*  
(John 6:68).

And after the Lord had risen from the dead, He says to Thomas, *"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing."*

Thomas says: *"My Lord and my God"*

(John 20:28).

This is the central issue surrounding the account of the man born blind - it is all about Jesus' identity:

Is this Man "from God" or not?

### **A TEST OF OUR FAITH**

The Pharisees were ruthless in their attack of the man born blind.

- first, they tried to claim that he hadn't been blind from birth and even called in his parents to sow the seeds of doubt
- but that didn't work
- so they continued their interrogation of the man which ultimately backfired on them, because the harder they pressed him the stronger he grew in his conviction that Jesus was God, saying...

*"If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing" (v. 33).*

The Pharisees openly denied the Divinity of Jesus.

They represent strong, negative spiritual forces in and around us that work to discredit the Lord's saving power, *specifically* the Lord's saving power in His Word

**This gets played out in lots of different ways:**

Our faith gets tested...

- by life struggles - serious health issues, accidents, abuse, loss, a broken relationship
- by crises of faith (not sure what to believe)

- hard sayings (tempted to throw the proverbial baby out w/the bath water when we come across hard teachings in the Writings)
- by the comforts and pleasures of the world - who needs God?
- by questions about church, policies, questioning the use of organized religion

## A QUESTION OF POWER

There's a striking *qualifier* in the Gospels:

We're reminded of the fact that sometimes the Lord couldn't perform miracles even when He wanted to!

Gospel of Mark says Jesus "*could not do any miracles [in his own country], except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them*" (Mark 6:5).

You heard the remarkable explanation for this in our reading this morning.

It was "*because [the people in His hometown] had seen Him from infancy like any other man and were unable to add to that idea the idea of His Divinity*" (AE 815).

**In other words, because they couldn't get their head around the idea that Jesus was God, they couldn't be healed!**

This principle holds true today.

In that reading we *also* learned that...

*"[natural] diseases represent and thus signify spiritual diseases and spiritual diseases **can only be healed by the Lord, by looking to His Divine Omnipotence and by repentance of life.**" (AE 815).*

This is the real test of our faith!

We need to be able to see the Lord's truths as having the POWER to heal us

Otherwise, these truths remain as just words on a page...

- important words
- maybe inspired
- but not "from God"
  - not powerful enough to change our life

The Book *True Christianity* says,

*"It is on everyone's lips that the Word comes from God, is Divinely inspired, and is therefore holy. But until now it has not been known where the Divinity is in the Word...people who respect nature more than God or as God and who therefore think under the influence of their own ideas...can easily fall into the wrong perspective on the Word and into contempt for it...When they read the Word they say to themselves, "What is this?" "Is this Divine?" Would a God who has infinite wisdom talk like this?" (TC 189).*

### **How do we harness this power?**

By going back to the Word and allowing the power of truth to GAIN MOMENTUM in us:

Listen to these teachings:

*"As to power, namely the power to think or will or perceive, do good, believe or shun falsity and evil; it...all comes...by means of truth..." (AC 6343)*

*"Everyone...can shun evils as if of themselves, **from the Lord's power**, if they implore or plead for it..." (Life 31).*

*"The smallest amount of Divine power is enough, **every time it is called upon**, to tame instantly the entire devil's crew, even if it consisted of millions" (AC 8626).*

## "I WAS BLIND, AND NOW I SEE"

The Lord's truth has a wonderful and mysterious way of growing and gathering MOMENTUM in us when we accept it, with humility, as God speaking to us.

**This is how the power of truth is UNLEASHED...**

By letting the Lord heal us of our *spiritual* diseases...

- our pride and arrogance
- our sarcasm and cynicism
- our stubborn insistence that we know all the answers to life's troubles

This is how the angels in heaven gain power - by humbly confessing, each and every day, that they have *no* power on their own, without the Lord (AC 1752).

May the truths of the Lord's Word...

- gain power in your life (explosive power - see TC 209 - in the spiritual world, if people w/false beliefs "*touch the Word, there is an explosion with a loud bang, and are thrown into the corner of the room...*")
- this is why the Lord talks about our faith "moving mountains"
- crumble your doubts and fears

May the truths of the Lord's Word...

- heal your hurt and pain
- heal your frustration and anger
- heal your grief
- heal your broken spirit

May the truths of the Lord's Word

- change the way you...
  - think
  - feel

- act

*"Now Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him,*

*"Do you believe in the Son of God?"*

*He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"*

*And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."*

*Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshipped Him."*

**AMEN.**