



# SEEING EVERY MAN CLEARLY

MEN'S MINISTRIES DAY 2020



By W. A. Mills, Jr.

IPHC Men's Ministries Director

**Mark 8:22-26 (KJV)** <sup>22</sup>And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. <sup>23</sup>And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. <sup>24</sup>And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. <sup>25</sup>After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and **he was restored, and saw every man clearly.** <sup>26</sup>And he sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."<sup>1</sup>

The theme for IPHC Men's Ministries in 2020 is "Seeing Every Man Clearly" based on Mark 8:25. Mark speaks of a blind man healed by Jesus: "He was restored, and saw every man clearly."<sup>2</sup> There are several unusual facts about this miracle. It is recorded only in Mark's gospel. It is the only time Jesus healed someone in stages and was the only time Jesus spit on anyone.

In Mark 7:31-37, Jesus healed a deaf man with a speech impediment by putting his fingers into the man's ears, then spitting on his fingers and touching the man's tongue. In John 9:1-7, Jesus healed a man born blind by spitting on the ground, making mud with his saliva and applying the mud to the man's eyes, instructing him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man obeyed the instruction of Jesus and went home seeing. Although those two instances involved spittle, this is the only time Jesus ever literally spit on anyone.

One has to wonder, "Why?" Why did Jesus spit in this man's eyes? Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, spitting on someone would be offensive in almost every nation and culture—even illegal—regarded as a crime, punishable by the law. Given the social distancing required by the Coronavirus, spitting on someone today would especially be offensive as saliva is a carrier of highly contagious bacteria and other autoimmune diseases. The ceremonial code of the Old Testament, including references from the New Testament, regarding spitting in someone's face was considered contemptible, disgraceful, and abhorrent, rendering the victim ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:8, Numbers 12:14, Deuteronomy 25:9, Job 30:10, Matthew 26:67, Matthew 27:30, Mark 10:34, Mark 14:65, Mark 15:19). So, then, why did Jesus spit in this man's eyes?

Although Mark does not answer that question, he does tell us Jesus healed this man. Proverbs 16:4 says, "The Lord has made everything for his own purposes."<sup>3</sup> We can be confident Jesus had a reason for everything He did. Some have suggested this man's eye disease may have left a crusty, painful discharge in his orbital sockets, and perhaps Jesus spit in his eyes to alleviate the discomfort of his pain. No matter the reason, the real story of this miracle is that it was two miracles in one. It is a two-stage miracle. In the first stage, the man can see, but his vision is blurred. In the second stage, the man can see with clarity. There is nothing else like this miracle in the gospel narratives.

Bible students regard the miracles of Jesus as miracles with a message or signs with significance, understanding there is some divine truth or lesson derived from the works of our Lord. Jesus does not do wonders just to show off. Why, then, did Jesus heal this man in stages?

It was not because of any lack in Jesus, rendering this man's blindness a hopeless case. Nor was it that Jesus tried and failed the first time.

The key to understanding this miracle lies in the preceding verses, recording the feeding of the 4000 (Mark 8:1-10). Immediately afterward, the Pharisees approached Jesus, wanting to argue with him (vv. 11-12). Jesus and his disciples got into a boat where he warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (v. 15), referring to the false teaching of the Pharisees. The disciples thought he was talking about literal bread. Jesus then rebuked them by saying, "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?"<sup>4</sup> Another translation says, "Are you blind and deaf? Don't you remember?"<sup>5</sup> The questions of Jesus portray the imagery of a parent correcting a child with the query, "Didn't you hear what I said? Have you forgotten everything I told you?" met with bewildered eyes and a confused reply: "Yes, I heard you and, No, I don't remember." This miracle is like a parable of the disciples' spiritual confusion—confusion caused by a lack of visual clarity.

When I was in the first grade, I suffered from amblyopia, which means "lazy eye." One eye was weaker than the other eye; so, I wore a patch over the stronger eye to strengthen the weaker eye. My "lazy eye" was not communicating clearly with my brain. Over time the prescribed therapy worked, increasing the communication with my brain, thereby allowing me to see with improved clarity. Jesus is reproofing his disciples for their lack of spiritual perception.

Cloudy spiritual vision affects every Christian to some degree. The Apostle Paul acknowledges our lack of spiritual perception in a transient world, saying, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror" (1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV).<sup>6</sup> Eugene Peterson paraphrases the words of Jesus in *The Message*, saying, "We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a

fog, peering through a mist.”<sup>7</sup> The reply of the blind man in Mark 8:24 is very similar, “I see men as trees, walking.”<sup>8</sup> All men have spiritual nearsightedness to one degree or another. What, then, should we learn from this miracle? What is the message for us, as men on the journey of becoming more like Jesus? There are at least four lessons for us in this miracle.

### **1. JESUS DOES NOT TREAT US ALL THE SAME WAY**

At first, this does not sound right. I grew up singing the song, “It is no secret what God can do, *what He's done for others He'll do for you* with arms wide open He'll pardon you. It is no secret what God can do.”<sup>9</sup> The phrase “what He's done for others He'll do for you” seems to suggest that He does treat us all the same way.

The Apostle Peter overcame extreme prejudice in his life toward Gentiles, making this statement in the home of a Gentile named Cornelius: “Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34, KJV).<sup>10</sup> Peter later said in his first letter to Christians, “Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God” (1 Peter 3:18, NLT).<sup>11</sup> These were Jewish and Gentile converts. The invitation of the gospel to trust in Christ alone for salvation is to all people everywhere. God is no respecter of a person in the matter of salvation: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13, KJV).<sup>12</sup>

Yet, it is evident from a study of the miracles of Christ that He does not treat us all the same way in how He heals. Jesus has the power to heal instantly or in stages. He is all-powerful; yet, He does not treat us all the same. Jesus heals one with a touch, another with a word, one with a glance, and still someone else at a great distance. He touches one and never sees the other, yet He heals both. Ray Pritchard rightly observes,

“It is a great advance spiritually to come to the place where you can say, ‘Lord, you don’t have to treat me the way you treat my neighbor.’ Now we all understand that truth theoretically, but it is hard to come to grips with it when your daughter is sick unto death, and your neighbor’s children are healthy and happy. No one knows exactly why two people get cancer, and one lives while the other dies. The truth is, he might do for you exactly what he’s done for someone else, or he might do more, or he might do less, or he might do something entirely different. He’s God. He can deal with us the way he wants. Our God is infinitely creative in the way he deals with us as he brings us to spiritual maturity.”<sup>13</sup>

## **2. JESUS DEALS WITH US ACCORDING TO OUR NEED**

This truth is abundantly clear in this miracle. Jesus dealt with this poor blind man privately by taking him outside the village to heal him. Jesus removes this man from the spectatorship of those who were interested only in a show. He dealt with this man compassionately and personally, by touching him twice, something He had never done in any other healing account. Likewise, Jesus knows our individual need, our history, our journey, our scars and wounds, our preconceived ideas, our lack of understanding, and our ensuing fears. He, therefore, deals with us according to our needs, as our “merciful and faithful high priest”<sup>14</sup> who “understands our weaknesses” and invites us to “come boldly to the throne of our gracious God” where we “will receive his mercy, and find grace to help us when we need it most.”<sup>15</sup>

## **3. WE DO NOT GET BETTER AT THE SAME RATE OR IN THE SAME WAY**

The people of Bethsaida brought this blind man to Jesus, begging Him to heal him. How often have we done the same, praying for our loved ones who desperately need the Master’s touch? It is good that we pray for others, especially those who are lost, asking God to open their eyes that they may see. It humbles us and causes us to confess, “Lord, unless you help them, they will not recover. Unless you work, nothing will ever change.”

Often, the change we seek comes very slowly. For every man who is suddenly, radically, and completely transformed, it seems there are many more who must grow in Christ slowly, through stages, whose spiritual vision starts cloudy and only slowly gets better. Some people come to Christ and flourish, becoming fervent disciples in a short time. Others take years to learn the Word and grow strong in the faith. Many will struggle with blurry vision for a long time. All of us have blind spots we do not see because if we saw them, they would not be blind spots.

#### **4. OUR SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION IS OFTEN CLOUDED AND IMPERFECT**

The once-blind man can now see, albeit he does not have 20/20 vision. He has something like 20/500 vision. He is what you might call legally blind but not literally blind. He sees “men as trees walking,” meaning he can see, but not clearly. Is that not a picture of all the followers of Jesus? We all have blind spots, places of weakness, and areas of life where we see with blurry vision, where our sanctification is far from complete. Who among us would say, “I have arrived? I am truly like Jesus in every part of my life.”

It is imperative to understand that spiritual growth is growth. It is not an instant development. That is terrible news for a generation of impatient believers. We are like the man who prayed, “Lord, give me patience and give it to me now!” In reality, we are born as little children, babes in Christ, who must go through all stages of life, learning and growing as we go along. We learn to walk by trying and falling, trying and falling, and then trying and falling some more.

So, what are we to do? Several things come to mind. Allow new Christians time to grow. Do not give up when you or others do not experience transformation as quickly as you desire.

Go to God in complete honesty. It is a significant advance spiritually when we can say, “Lord, I am blind. Help me to see.” Remember that God intends to bring something good out of your imperfect vision. He plans to bring you to a place of deeper trust in Him. The Lord does not waste anything, not even those times when you do not see clearly.

The breaking point in this miracle occurred when Jesus asked the man, “Do you see anything?”<sup>16</sup> What finally saved this man was his honesty. He did not lie to Jesus. He could have said, “Lord, I see all things clearly.” If he had said that, he would never have improved. His honesty gave him the sight he did not have. Jesus knew the answer to the question. He wanted the man to be honest about his actual condition.

Likewise, we too must come to Jesus as we are. And when we do, he takes us as we are, but he never leaves us that way. The invitation of Jesus is always very personal. Are you blind? Come to Jesus. Do you see men as trees walking? Come to Jesus. Do you desire to see men clearly? Come to Jesus.

Mark says this man “was restored and saw every man clearly.”<sup>17</sup> It is our sincere, earnest prayer that our ability to see will increase so that we, too, will see every man clearly. *Man in the Mirror* reports for every ten men in your church, nine will have kids who leave the church. Eight will not find their jobs satisfying. Six will pay the monthly minimum on credit cards. Five will have problems with pornography. Four will get divorced. Only one will have a biblical worldview. All ten will be struggling with some life issue.<sup>18</sup>

We must see every man clearly. We need, like Ezekiel, the prophet, to sit among the hurting men of our world (Ezekiel 3:14-15), demonstrating the care and compassion of Jesus. Sometimes, that means showing up and shutting up, what the Hebrew people call “sitting

Shiva,”<sup>19</sup> waiting upon the Lord for that moment in time when a man asks about our hope as a believer. Having earned the right to be heard, we then, ready to give a reason for the hope we have in Christ, can explain the good news gently and respectfully (1 Peter 3:15-16). In so doing, we build a relational bridge to a man, allowing us to introduce that man to our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal bridge of salvation who empowers us to see every man clearly.

---

<sup>1</sup>*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Mark 8:22-26, Public Domain.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid*, Mark 8:25

<sup>3</sup>*Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, Tyndale House Foundation, 1996, 2004, 2015.

<sup>4</sup>*Holy Bible*, New American Standard Bible, Mark 8:18, The Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995.

<sup>5</sup>*Holy Bible*, God’s Word Translation, Mark 8:18, God’s Word Mission Society, 1995.

<sup>6</sup>*Holy Bible*, New International Version, Biblica, Inc., 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011.

<sup>7</sup>*Holy Bible*, The Message, Eugene H. Peterson, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002.

<sup>8</sup>*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Public Domain.

<sup>9</sup>Hamblen, Stuart, *It Is No Secret*, Duchess Music Corporation, 1976.

<sup>10</sup>*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Public Domain.

<sup>11</sup>*Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, Tyndale House Foundation, 1996, 2004, 2015.

<sup>12</sup>*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Public Domain.

<sup>13</sup>Pritchard, Ray, *Men As Trees Walking*, <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/men-as-trees-walking/>. Accessed 3 April 2020.

<sup>14</sup>*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Hebrews 2:17, Public Domain.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, Hebrews 4:16.

<sup>16</sup>*Holy Bible*, New International Version, Mark 8:23, Biblica, Inc., 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011.



<sup>17</sup>*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Mark 8:25, Public Domain.

<sup>18</sup>Morley, Pat, For Every 10 Men In Your Church, <https://maninthemirror.org/2004/02/16/for-every-10-men-in-your-church/>. Accessed 3 April 2020.

<sup>19</sup>Sitting Shiva, <https://www.shiva.com/learning-center/sitting-shiva/>. Accessed 3 April 2020.

**NOTE:** A companion Study Guide and PowerPoint are available upon request.