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~ **The Man with Mud in His Eyes** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read John 8:12 through 9:41.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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| John 8:12-59 NASB | John 9:1-41 NASB |
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| <p>¹² Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." ¹³ So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." ¹⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. ¹⁶ But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone <i>in it</i>, but I and the Father who sent Me. ¹⁷ Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." ¹⁹ So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." ²⁰ These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.</p> <p>²¹ Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." ²² So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'" ²³ And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. ²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am <i>He</i>, you will die in your sins." ²⁵ So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you <i>from</i> the beginning? ²⁶ I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." ²⁷ They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am <i>He</i>, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I</p> | <p>As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "<i>It was</i> neither <i>that</i> this man sinned, nor his parents; but <i>it was</i> so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." ⁶ When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came <i>back</i> seeing. ⁸ Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Others were saying, "This is he," <i>still</i> others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." ¹⁰ So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is He?" He <i>*said</i>, "I do not know."</p> <p>¹³ They <i>*brought</i> to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." ¹⁶ Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they <i>*said</i> to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."</p> <p>¹⁸ The Jews then did not believe <i>it</i> of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, ¹⁹ and</p> |

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always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”³⁰ As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” ³³ They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.”

³⁹ They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus *said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. ⁴¹ You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God.”

⁴⁸ The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.⁵⁰ But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” ⁵² The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ ⁵³ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?” ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you

questioned them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?” ²⁰ His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹ but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. ²³ For this reason his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴ So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵ He then answered, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶ So they said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear *it* again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?”²⁸ They reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.” ³⁰ The man answered and said to them, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and *yet* He opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. ³² Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” So they put him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.” ³⁸ And he said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him. ³⁹ And Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

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| say, 'He is our God'; ⁵⁵ and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw <i>it</i> and was glad." ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." ⁵⁹ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. | |
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights about the Pool of Siloam

The following notes from *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Malina and Rohrbaugh.

- Non-literate societies would depend heavily upon the validity of the spoken word to corroborate the truth or falsity of claims. Deuteronomy 19:15 established the need for two or three witnesses. Witnesses were needed not just in crime-related areas but for every area of life from business contracts to marriage contracts. Attempts to create one's own testimony by bragging was considered shameful behavior. Jesus claims that his self-witness is as valid as his Father's.
- In a collectivist society, to know someone meant that you knew where they were from and their family background. Jesus said they did not know where he was from, i.e., his divine origin.
- To judge according to the flesh reflected an ancient idea that one's physical form and one's character matched. When Jesus said they were judging according to the flesh, he was saying they were making a judgment based upon his physical form. But his outward appearance was not the true revelator of his identity and character.
- "If you had known me, you would have known my Father" is a Middle Eastern truism – "like father, like son." Males were thought to be shaped by the father and daughters by the mothers.
- When they ask Jesus, "Who are you," this is not so much a modern question of self-identity as it is a question of what social group is he part of for one's identity was largely determined by one's group.
- Jesus' statement that "the truth will make you free" was not met with humility but pride and offense. A person freed from slavery, though free, was never looked upon with the same status as a person who was always free. Thus, in this statement, Jesus tests to see if these people who say they believe are really believers. They fail the test for they immediately assert that they are Abraham's descendants. By stating their connection to Abraham, they were claiming to be people of character who were never enslaved. But if they were people of the character of Abraham, then why did they want to kill him?

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- By questioning their connection to Abraham and connecting them to the devil was one of the deepest insults one could give to another. The Jews return the favor by calling him a Samaritan and saying he is connected to an evil spirit.
- This kind of dialog and interaction was always an indication of quick wit and a resort to violence is a sign that one's wit has failed. Here, John shows that Jesus has won the exchange because the Jews resort to violence and want to stone him.
- "Who sinned? This man or his parents?" This question reflects two cultural ideas. The first was that all calamity and misfortune was the consequence of sin. The second was that a child born blind or with some other misfortune either sinned in the womb or was being punished for a parent's sin. This was the idea of collectivism where the individual would share in the group's fortune or misfortune. Later rabbis taught that children could sin in the womb or if a mother committed idolatry, the child in the womb was idolatrous also.
- In the Mediterranean world, saliva was thought to protect people from the evil eye.
- Later Pharasaic history stated that anointing eyes was not permissible on the Sabbath.
- The Pool of Siloam was at the far southeast corner of the city inside the wall. It is fed by the Gihon Spring by means of a tunnel dug through rock around 700 BC when the city's water supply was threatened by Assyria.

These notes are from *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*

- The lighting of the city during the Feast of Tabernacles was prominent and accompanied by a lighting ceremony and dancing. This would be a perfect time for Jesus to say, "I am the light of the world."
- Most of the festival's activities took place in the Court of the Women.
- 8:20 says that Jesus spoke these things near the place where money was kept. In the ancient world, temples doubled as banks because they were considered sacred spaces and therefore the safest place for money.
- 8:22 – "Will he kill himself" could have been an insult because while Jews generally frowned upon suicide, Greeks and Romans approved of it in certain circumstances. Thus, they are asking if he is going to act like a Roman or Greek.
- "Which of you convicts me of sin?" The exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees reflects ancient courtroom rhetoric where the accused could say that the accusers had failed to prove their case. They would also accuse each other of the same things. Thus, Jesus accuses them of being of their father, the devil, while they accuse him of being a Samaritan and possessed by an evil spirit.
- The Pool of Siloam had four porches and was used in the Feast of Tabernacles water ceremony. It was considered sacred
- Judaism valued charity but begging was still looked down upon. Sirach 40:28 says that death is preferable to begging.

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Answer these reflective questions.

In John 8:12, Jesus said he is the light of the world and that those who walk in darkness will have the light of life. How does Jesus bring light to life? How has he been the light of the world for you?

In John 8:32 Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.” In what ways does truth free people? How do lies bring people into bondage? In what ways has Jesus set you free?

In John 8:44, Jesus boldly told some people that their father was the devil and shows that people are connected either to the devil or to God? How does a escape his connection with Satan and come to have God as his father? Who is your spiritual father?

In John 9, Jesus made mud, or clay, and put it on the man’s eyes and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. Why did Jesus not just heal him? Why did he make the mud and have him wash? What do you think is the significance of those actions?

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The blind man was given sight, but Jesus told the rulers that their sight was taken away and they were the blind ones in the story. How does one become spiritually blind? What made the rulers blind to Jesus? If we are spiritually blind, how can we have our spiritual vision restored?
