

Main Idea: In John 9:13-34 we see the power of a testimony. From the example of the man who was once blind, we learn that when you share a testimony you must do three things.

- I. When you share a testimony, you’re telling others what Jesus did for you (13-15).
 - A. The man presented the facts.
 - B. The man put the focus on Jesus.
- II. When you share a testimony, you often generate questions (16-23).
 - A. They asked *how* (16).
 - B. They asked *what* (17).
 - C. They asked *his parents* (18-23).
- III. When you share a testimony, you can be confident because you’re telling others what you know to be true (24-34).
 - A. You don’t have to know everything about Jesus to tell what you know (24-25).
 1. The man admitted he didn’t know everything about Jesus.
 2. The man emphasized what he did know, namely, what Jesus did for him.
 - B. You don’t have to answer every question to tell what you know (26-27).
 1. The Jews repeated their questions.
 2. The man asked questions of his own.
 - C. You don’t have to be intimidated if you tell what you know (28-33).
 1. The Jews threw insults at the man.
 2. The man responded by sticking to the facts.
 - D. You don’t have to have the last word to tell what you know (34).
 1. Because of his testimony this man lost his religion.
 2. Because he lost his religion this man is now ready to see Jesus.

Make It Personal: Consider two questions...

1. Do you have a testimony to share?
2. Are you sharing it?

Scripture Reading: This morning we’ll be looking at the testimony in John 9 of a blind man whose eyes Jesus opened. Warren Wiersbe says the man’s testimony reminds him of Psalm 27. I agree. As we read it now, imagine these words coming from this man.

Message: The Bible is full of drama. Of course, the Bible as a whole records the dramatic story of what God is doing to redeem a people for His and their eternal pleasure. And throughout the dramatic story, there are dramatic stories of God’s gracious work in the lives of individuals.

This morning we come to one my favorites. It’s the true story of what Jesus did for a man born blind, how He gave that man sight, not once but twice, first physical sight, and then spiritual sight. And this story is filled with drama.

There’s the drama of the miracle itself. The disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind (2)?”

Jesus’s answer? “Neither this man nor his parents sinned (3a).” He’s not denying that they’re sinners, but He’s making it clear that the man’s blindness is not tied to any personal sin.

Why then? Jesus said, “This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life (3b).” God sent His Son to earth to do a work, the work of rescuing sinners. That’s what this is about. God wants people to know Him, so you’re about to see Him put His glory on display.

And so Jesus spit on the ground, made some mud, put the mud right on the man’s eyes, and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man obeyed, and instantly, for the first time in his life, he began to see.

But that’s not the end of the drama. The miracle caused a chain reaction of events that affected the man’s neighbors and parents, and all the way to the religious leaders of the country. When Jesus said that this was about putting the work of God on display, He

***Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

meant it. As a result of this miracle, a lot of people were confronted with the glory of God, and quite frankly, they didn't know what to do with what they saw.

And that gave occasion for the dramatic testimony we're to hear this morning. One of my favorite lines in all of the Bible comes from the lips of the healed blind man when he told his hostile interrogators, "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

This morning we're going to see firsthand the power of a testimony. One of the greatest evangelistic tools we have as followers of Jesus is our testimony. With your testimony, you can put God's glorious work on display, and with your testimony, you can also participate in the work of God to rescue sinners.

"What's a testimony?" you ask. It's not complicated. We find our answer as we watch what the healed blind man did in John 9:13-34. From his example we learn that when you share a testimony you're doing three things.

I. When you share a testimony, you're telling others what Jesus did for you (13-15).

Our story begins in verse 13, "They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind." Who is "they"? Perhaps the man's neighbors. Back in verse 8 they saw him right after he was healed and asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some said he was. Others said no way. But the man insisted, "I am!" And he told them *Jesus* had opened his eyes.

That name had caused quite a stir. Jesus had just incensed the Jews at the end of the previous chapter by claiming to pre-date Abraham. They picked up stones to kill Jesus, but He got away. Now He's back again, and not everybody is happy about it.

They brought the man to the Pharisees. It's possible that the Pharisees were acting as representatives of the Sanhedrin.¹ We see a similar delegation back in John 1:24. When there were messianic rumors on the street, the Sanhedrin would send their "Bible men," the Pharisees, to do an investigation.

John adds this note in verse 14, "Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath." Uh oh. Another Sabbath violation. Back in John 5 Jesus healed a paralytic, and it wasn't His only Sabbath day miracle. John 5:16 says, "So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him."

What's the problem? For starters, the Jews said that making mud on the Sabbath was a violation of God's law. Furthermore, they said it was illegal to practice the art of healing on the Sabbath, except in cases of extreme emergency.²

And Jesus did both. Why? Why does Jesus keep doing these miracles on the Sabbath? Doesn't He know He's offending the Jews? Oh, He knows. He also knows that the Jews have added extra commands to God's commands, and in so doing have produced a system of bondage.

Verse 15—"Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. 'He put mud on my eyes,' the man replied, 'and I washed, and now I see.'"

So there it is, a testimony. When you share a testimony, you're telling others what Jesus did for you. In this case...

A. The man presented the facts. *He put mud on my eyes.* That's a fact. There were witnesses that saw it happen. *I washed, and now I see.* Also facts. The man is just telling the story as it happened. And in telling the story...

B. The man put the focus on Jesus. *HE put the mud on my eyes.* My eyes aren't working today because of what I did, but because of what HE did.

¹ Observation by Leon Morris, p. 484.

² See Hendriksen, p. 80.

Those are the elements of a good testimony. You present the facts, and you do so in a way that puts the focus Jesus. In this case, I was blind, but Jesus did something so that now I see.

That's my testimony, too. I used to be blind, blinded by my sin. I thought I was a good person, but when I was eleven, the Lord used the preaching of His Word by a pastor in West Liberty, Ohio to open my eyes to the truth. I saw that I was a sinner under God's wrath, and then I saw that the perfect Son of God had died for my sins, and that God raised His Son from the dead for my salvation. And He gave me faith to believe that good news, and He gave me new life, eternal life. Those are the facts, and Jesus is the One responsible for it all.

That's how a testimony works. When you share a testimony, you're telling others what Jesus did for you. I just shared with you my testimony of salvation, but there are other kinds of testimonies because there are other things that Jesus has done for us, and continues to do. I could tell you testimonies of how He blessed me with a precious wife, and children, and a calling to service, and a ministry, and wisdom for challenges, and on and on. If you know Christ, you could do the same, and we should. When Jesus does something for us, we should talk about it in ways that glorify Him. That would be a good lunchtime conversation today!

Now back to our story, and to our second point.

II. When you share a testimony, you often generate questions (16-23).

This man's testimony surely did! Three kinds of questions resulted.

A. They asked *how* (16). In verse 16, "Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others asked, 'How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?' So they were divided."

Here we see the initial effect of the man's testimony. It divided the Pharisees. Some said that Jesus' actions proved He wasn't from God. That's the same conclusion another group of Pharisees came to in Matthew 12:24, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

But others said, well, if He wasn't from God, how could He do these miracles? This latter group was apparently smaller than the former, and most certainly quieter, for we don't hear from them again in the story.

There's the first question generated by the man's testimony. *How? How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?* Next...

B. They asked *what* (17). That's verse 17, "Finally they turned again to the blind man, 'What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' The man replied, 'He is a prophet.'"

Whereas the Pharisees had asked the question *how* amongst themselves, they next addressed the question *what* to the blind man. *What do you have to say about Him?* In other words, what's your conclusion about the identity of this man?

And his answer? *He is a prophet.* That's the same thing the Samaritan woman said back in John 4:19 ("Sir, I can see that you are a prophet"). Why does this man call Jesus a prophet? Think what the Old Testament prophets did. For starters, some of them did miracles, like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. And of course, the prophets gave revealing messages about what God was going to do in the future. That's what Jesus just did. Jesus, in essence, told the man, *go, wash in the pool, and you will see.* And so it happened. No wonder he concluded, "He is a prophet."

Granted, as you and I know, Jesus is certainly more than a prophet. But we know that because we know the rest of the story. And we know the rest of the story because God has been working with us and teaching us, in some cases for years.

This blind man has had but sixty seconds or so with Jesus. What's striking is to see the incredible progression that takes place right in this story regarding the blind man's understanding of Jesus' identity. He referred to Jesus as *a man* back in verse 11. Now in verse 17 He's *a prophet*. A little later in verse 33 he says Jesus is "from God." And finally in verses 35-38 he affirms Jesus to be "the Son of Man" who is worthy of worship.

When I say this man is giving a testimony for Jesus, that doesn't mean he's got it all figured out. He's just telling what he knows at the time based on what he has seen. That's what a testimony is.

Frankly, I'm not convinced the man is truly saved yet, not as of verse 17. Yes, by the end of the story, he will be, and he will affirm the truth about Jesus, and even worship Jesus, as a truly saved man does. But to bring him to that point, the Sovereign Lord did a work in life, a gracious work, step by step.

Isn't that what Jesus said He would do in verse 3? "This happened so that the work [literally 'works'] of God might be displayed in his life." Do you see it? The Lord is at work here, and He's not just restoring a man's eyes (what good is a new set of eyes if he ends up perishing in hell?). Jesus is restoring the sinner to Himself. And to accomplish that saving work, first He heals this sinner's eyes, but then puts him in a situation where he has to face some hard things, like the Pharisees' hostility and hypocrisy. And as he faces these hard things, he's being brought along to a fuller understanding of truth, namely, the truth about a religious system that can't save his soul, and the truth about a Savior who can.

Do you ever get frustrated when you share Christ with someone, and they seem to get it, and then they don't? Be patient. How long has the Lord been working with you?

The process continued for the blind man with another set of questions. This time the Pharisees didn't ask *him*, but rather...

C. They asked *his parents* (18-23). Notice verse 18, "The Jews [not just the Pharisees?] still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents."

How's that for a slap in the face? They don't believe the man. He gave them his testimony, and told them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But they basically conclude that he's either misguided or a lying.

Have you ever been in that situation? Have you ever been falsely accused of lying, especially by people you previously respected and trusted? How did that affect you? It probably rattled you, didn't it?

Don't miss this. This man is standing before a group of people he has always looked up to. These are his spiritual leaders. They're men of the Book. He's heard them teach in the temple all his life. Some of them have probably put coins in his beggar's cup. We might say they represent his ticket to heaven.

And now he sees them basically throwing him under the bus, so to speak, calling him a liar, when he knows his story is true. And he hears them calling this amazing person who just healed him *a sinner*, and he knows that's not true.

Again, don't miss the Lord's hand in this. He's setting this man free from the grip of the religious system these men represent. And He's doing it by letting the man see that these men are not godly, as he previously thought, but wicked (even blind) sinners themselves.

So they send for his parents. Listen to the dialogue in verses 19-23: "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for

already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’”

When I hear the parents’ response, I think of Proverbs 29:25, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare.” Here’s a father and mother who are in the snare of the fear of man. They’re timid, evasive, and self-protecting. They substantiate the facts that won’t endanger them—yes, he’s our son; yes, he was born blind. But they won’t even touch the questions *how* and *who*. How can he see? Who opened his eyes? “Uh, we don’t know. Just ask him,” they said. “He’s old enough. He can speak for himself.”

Why are they holding back? Don’t they know who healed their son? Without a doubt. The first place their healed son went, according to verse 7, was home. And once he got there, according to verse 11, he kept telling the neighbors, “The man they call Jesus did this.” Surely, they knew.

But the fear of man is a snare. They won’t give a clear testimony for Jesus, even though they could, for one simple reason. Fear. They’re afraid of losing the things of this world. They’ve heard what the higher ups are saying, that if you have anything to do with this Jesus, you’ll be excommunicated from the synagogue, and that’s unbearable to them. The synagogue represents their friends, their business contacts, their social life, and of course, their spirituality and their hope for heaven. To be put out of the synagogue means they’ll be cut off from their friends, cut off from their previous means of making a living, and most of all, cut off from the religious system that’s the basis for their standing with God.

They may be glad that their son can see, but these are the things that make their hearts even gladder.

It’s sad, isn’t it? Protecting their own necks is more important to these parents than giving Jesus the honor He deserves for the kind work He did for their son.

Do you know what’s just as sad? It’s when, because of the fear of man, we who were once blind but now see do the same thing. How many times have I had opportunity to speak up and give a testimony for Jesus, but didn’t because I was afraid of what I might lose, like people’s acceptance and approval? Oh, it’s easy these days to talk about “God” in general terms, but “Jesus” is a different story. I won’t pay much of a price to say to my neighbor, “Hey, I’d like to tell you what God did in my life,” for he’ll just define God in his own terms. But when I say, “Let me tell you what God’s Son, Jesus Christ, did for me, and what He alone can do for you,” now that’s a different story.

You say, “I need help in this area. The fear of man is a big snare to me. What can help me overcome it?” Good question. We find the answer in our third point.

III. When you share a testimony, you can be confident because you’re telling others what you know to be true (24-34).

Notice what happened in verse 24, “A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give glory to God,’ they said. ‘We know this man is a sinner.’”

Check out the God-talk. They tell him to *give glory to God*. You can take that in a couple of ways. It could mean they’re insinuating he’s holding back some information, so they’re telling him to *tell the God-honoring truth*, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. More likely, as Leon Morris suggests, they’re wanting him to stop giving Jesus the credit for the miracle. *Come on, fellow. All Jesus did was put mud in your eyes and tell you to wash. He doesn’t deserve glory for that. God healed your eyes. God did the miracle, not this Jesus. So give glory to God!*³

³ See Leon Morris, p. 490-1.

I love the man's response, and from it we learn four keys to a confident testimony.

A. You don't have to know everything about Jesus to tell what you know (24-25). Listen to the man in verse 25, "He replied, 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'"

Sometimes we complicate things too much. "Who, me? Be a witness for Jesus? I can't do that. What if people ask me to explain the Trinity or Jesus' deity? What will I say?" How about just being honest? Why not do what this man did?

1. *The man admitted he didn't know everything about Jesus.* "You say He's a sinner. Whether He's a sinner or not, I don't know. I just met Him. But one thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Don't miss that. Instead of arguing about things he didn't know...

2. *The man emphasized what he did know, namely, what Jesus did for him.* I like Leon Morris's observation. He says, "No fine-spun web of airy theory can budge a man who is able to say with conviction 'one thing I know.'"⁴

So what *do* you know about Jesus? Sure, we all have more to learn, but what has He done in your life, and you *know* He's done it? I used to be filled with fear, but when Jesus saved my soul He took my fear away. One thing I know. I was afraid of dying, but Jesus filled me with the assurance of eternal life. What's He done for you?

Here's the first key to a confident testimony. You don't have to know everything about Jesus to tell what you know.

B. You don't have to answer every question to tell what you know (26-27). Not surprisingly, the questions came. Verse 26 says, "Then they asked him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?'" So...

1. *The Jews repeated their questions.* And what did the man do with their questions? In verse 27, "He answered, 'I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?'"

That's interesting. He didn't answer their questions. You don't to answer every question to tell what you know. In this case...

2. *The man asked questions of his own.* Bold questions, too. "Why do you want to hear it again? It's obvious you're not asking for information sake, because I already gave the information. Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

This guy is gutsy! Remember, he's standing before the religious authorities, but the authority they hold over his heart and life is weakening by the second. That word "too" is important. "Do you want to become his disciples, *too*?" This man is now calling himself a disciple of Jesus, and he's doing so with full knowledge of the potential consequences.

So you don't have to tell everything about Jesus to tell what you know. And you don't have to answer every question to tell what you know. A third key...

C. You don't have to be intimidated if you tell what you know (28-33). If anybody had reason to be intimidated, this man did, especially after what happened next. Notice verses 28-29, "Then they hurled insults at him and said, 'You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from.'"

Do you feel the heat rising in the room? I'll be honest, I don't particularly like confrontation. I don't even like to be around it. I was watching the presidential debate on television Thursday evening, and when the candidates started confronting each other

⁴ Leon Morris, p. 491.

with hard questions and even accusations, I felt my heart-rate go up because I thought to myself, “How would I respond if someone said that to me?!”

Friends, we need to keep this in mind. You don’t have to be intimidated as long as you tell what you know. In this case...

1. *The Jews threw insults at the man.* That’s what the text says. They *hurled insults at him.* And what did he do? Drop his head? Cave under the pressure? No.

2. *The man responded by sticking to the facts.* That’s precisely what he did in verses 30-33, “The man answered, ‘Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’”

I love it. They want to argue their point, but he just restates the obvious facts. Fact 1, this man opened my blind eyes. Fact 2, God doesn’t listen to sinners. Fact 3, nobody has ever heard of such a miracle before. Fact 4, if this man weren’t from God, He couldn’t do what He just did. Those are the facts.

Hendriksen suggests we see here “a beggar defeating a Pharisee with the Pharisee’s own weapon,” “syllogistic reasoning.”⁵ The Pharisees just used a syllogism on the man, and now the beggar does the same with them.

In the Pharisees’ syllogism, they presented a major premise, then a minor premise, then a conclusion. Their major premise: All people who are from God keep the Sabbath. Their minor premise: This man does not keep the Sabbath. Their conclusion: This man is not from God.

Now the beggar uses the Pharisees’ own weapon against them. Major premise: Only people from God are heard by God and enabled to open blind eyes. Minor premise: This Jesus was heard by God and opened my blind eyes. Conclusion: This Jesus is definitely from God.

So there’s the third key. You don’t have to be intimidated if you just tell what you know. One more...

D. You don’t have to have the last word to tell what you know (34). Notice verse 34, “To this they replied, ‘You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!’ And they threw him out.”

Ironically, the Jews now admit the point they previously denied. They know acknowledge this man was born blind. He is no fake. His eyes do now work. That means the miracle did happen.

But they’re not going to let the truth stand in the way of protecting their religious system and their own self-righteousness. It doesn’t matter to them that the man is speaking the truth. What matters now is that he’s dangerous and a threat to their system and standing with God. So he must go, as must the Jesus for whom he’s testifying.

Friends, it takes more than a miracle to save a sinner. When an unbelieving skeptic sees evidence for the supernatural, please realize he can’t see what he sees. Unless the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of his heart, he will insist he’s right in spite of the evidence.

If you want to know what his problem is, listen to the explanation given by a former Pharisee. “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” That’s 1 Corinthians 2:14, and that’s the

⁵ William Hendriksen, p. 91.

explanation of Paul, himself a former Pharisee who denied the evidence and killed Christians, until the Lord opened his eyes.

And so they start slinging mud. That's the quickest way to end any truth-seeking discussion. Do some character assassination. *You were steeped in sin at birth!* Then they hide behind their pious positions. *How dare you lecture us!* And then they threw him out.

Friends, think carefully about what just happened.

1. *Because of his testimony this man lost his religion.* Is that a bad thing? It's not, is it? For...

2. *Because he lost his religion this man is now ready to see Jesus.*

Do you see what the Sovereign Lord is doing for this man? He not only healed his eyes, but he allowed him with healed eyes begin to see the folly of his religious system.

If you're going to be a believer in Jesus, you cannot hold on to your previous religious system, whatever that system is. Jesus doesn't fit into man's systems. He's superior to any religious system. He can do what no system can do, for starters, give sight to a man born blind, and ultimately, give eternal life to the spiritually blind.

The man's parents chose the system over Jesus. But Jesus wants this man to see the ugliness of people who think they have God because they have a man-crafted system. And so He puts this healed blind man in the presence of others who are spiritually blind. He lets him feel the ugliness of their intellectual snobbery. He lets him watch these supposed men of God as they play games with the facts and refuse to face the truth. He lets him listen as they debate a technicality and deny the work of God. He wants him to see them cling to their self-righteous rags and forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

By the time this meeting ends, yes, this man gets kicked out of their synagogue and out of their religion, which means he's all alone now. But it also means he's ready to receive into His life the only One who can bring a sinner into the forever family of God.⁶

And we'll see that divine appointment next time.

Make It Personal: Consider two questions...

This morning we've learned that when you share a testimony, three things take place. One, you're telling others what Jesus did for you. Two, you may generate some questions. And three, you can be confident because you're telling others what you know to be true. Now, let's make it personal with two very simple questions.

1. *Do you have a testimony to share?* What's a testimony? It's telling others what Jesus did for you. So start here. What has Jesus done for you? Has He saved you? That's why He came into the world, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose again. He did that to save sinners. Has He saved *you*? If not, I urge you to ask Him to do so right now. And if He has, then you have the potential for a testimony.

And that leads to a second question.

2. *Are you sharing it?* Are you letting others know what Jesus has done for you? Are you talking about Him? And just as importantly, are you living in ways that make Him attractive to people? You don't have to force it. Just be ready. People will ask, "What happened to you? Why are you so happy?" And when they do, give them your testimony!

⁶ As we seek to reach people for Christ, let's learn from the Master. Our task isn't simply to get people to add Jesus to a cluttered life. It's not Jesus plus religion that they need. It's Jesus alone.