

# Blind Men Gropping for Light



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A blind friend once shared with me the story of what it was like to go blind. She suffered from macular degeneration—a condition where you lose the ability to see in the centre of your visual field. Consequently, my friend kept some peripheral vision, but was nevertheless functionally (and legally) blind.

As you can imagine, the transition was not easy. She had to learn to fold her paper money in different ways, so that she could quickly tell a \$5 from a \$50. Before she learned this trick, at least one unscrupulous store clerk took advantage of her inability to see (thankfully, Canadian currency now includes tactile features to help the blind identify money more easily).

My friend likewise had to learn to listen for audible pedestrian signals at crosswalks and to use a white cane to sweep the path ahead. Even with tools like these, though, you can still make mistakes. While taking a class on navigating as a blind person, her instructor (also blind) inadvertently led her into a street. It took a seeing person to let them know and guide them back to the sidewalk.

The Bible tells us that we are all blind—not physically, of course, but instead in a spiritual sense. “We hope for light, and behold, darkness,” the Prophet Isaiah writes, “and for brightness but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes” (Isaiah 59:9-10). And why? “Our iniquities have made a separation between us and God, and our sins have hidden His face from us” (59:2).

We are blinded by sin, so that righteousness is far from us and we

cannot see the love of God. Instead we grope in the darkness of this world, uncertain of our steps. And no matter how hard we try, we cannot force ourselves to “see.” We cannot simply will ourselves to be holy enough to find God on our own; our spiritual blindness is far too debilitating.

We seldom even notice the danger we are in—blind men and women stumbling in the dark. Any step could lead to disaster. But we have grown accustomed to the darkness and are not bothered by it. In fact, we find the light irksome; it reveals things about ourselves—about our sin—that we would rather not remember. Better to keep to the shadows, lest some stray beam of sunshine reveal us for what we really are.

Should such a spotlight fall on us, we may, spurred by the prick of conscience, suddenly realize the gulf between us and God. But how to get where He is? In the dark, all roads look the same. One man says go this way and another says go that way, but in the end we wind up nowhere. After all, “can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?” (Luke 6:39).

The honest man must eventually stop walking and give up. On his own, he knows he is helpless. He can’t find His way. And so he sits down at the edge of the road and weeps.

But then another Man enters the story. He comes forward and takes the blind man by the hand and raises him to his feet. He speaks a word, lays His hands on the clouded eyes, and suddenly what was once dark becomes clear. For this is Jesus, the Light of the World, and He has come

to open the eyes of the blind—to show them the Way back to God for He *is* the Way back to God.

“Out of the gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see,” Isaiah prophesied (29:18). In Christ, the promise is realized. He comes as a Guide to bring us back to the Father from whom we have run in our blindness. “I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know,” He promises in the words of the prophet, “in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:16).

God has not left us to wander aimlessly. He has sent His Son to shine upon us, to take our darkness into Himself and to destroy it at the cross. Bathed now in the light of the risen Christ, we make our way to the celestial city, led ever onward by the One who came to meet us in the dark and shadowy wilderness.

To be sure, we still struggle with spiritual vision impairment in this life. But God has given us good guides to help us on the way. He sends us His Spirit to lead us into truth (John 16:13). He bestows upon us His Word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). And He gives us our Christian sisters and brothers—fellow pilgrims on the Way—to help watch each other’s steps.

Led on by Christ, then, let us go where He leads. And should we meet another blind man by the side of the road, let us introduce him to the One who opens eyes and restores sight to the blind.