

## WHO SINNED?

(John 9: 1-41)

Intro: Who sinned?  
-Jesus' disciples asked.

Who sinned?  
-We ask.

The question hasn't changed much in 2000 years.  
-Neither has the answer.

### I. The Question: Who Sinned?

#### A. Why Do The Disciples Ask That Question?

##### 1. There were several assumptions.

- a. Things don't happen for no reason.
- b. Good things happen to good people.
- c. Bad things happen to bad people.
- d. Sickness is a bad thing.
  - Someone must have sinned.
  - Someone must have done something bad.
  - Someone must have done something wrong.

#That this man was born blind.

-Who sinned?

#This man?

\*What can a fetus do in the uterus?

\*What can a babe do in the womb?

+To be born blind.

#His parents?

\*What could they have done?

+That their son was born blind.

\*Didn't she get regular prenatal checkups?

\*Didn't she take her vitamins?

\*Did they have premarital sex?

+I once met a couple.

=Whose child had birth defects.

+They felt:

=Guilty.

=Responsible.

=It was their fault.

-Because they had had premarital sex.

2. Maybe the question isn't a question at all.
  - a. We sometimes do that.
    - When my kids were small.
      - #Did something I didn't like.
    - I might say:
      - #"What did you do that for?"
      - #"What were you thinking?"
        - \*These weren't really questions.
          - +I wasn't looking for information.
        - \*I was expressing my:
          - +Disappointment.
          - +Frustration.
  - b. Question "who sinned?" can be an exercise in:
    - Finger-pointing.
    - Fault-finding.
      - #"Ah, you did it!"
      - #"Now you're going to get it!"
    - Self-defense.
      - #"They did something wrong."
        - \*"They brought this on themselves."
      - #"We're not like them."
        - \*"This could never happen to us."

## B. We Do The Same Thing.

1. We try to defend ourselves.
  - a. If we hear that someone has been diagnosed with cancer.
    - Especially if it's lung cancer.
    - We ask:
      - #"Did she smoke?"
    - If the answer is "yes."
      - #We say:
        - \*"That explains it."
        - \*"But I'm not a smoker."
        - \*"So this could never happen to me."
    - If the answer is "no."
      - #We may think:
        - \*"She must have done something."
          - + "Maybe it's her diet."
          - + "Maybe it's her lifestyle."
          - + "Maybe it's in her DNA."
        - \*"But I'm not like her."
          - + "This could never happen to me."

- b. There is at least a part of us.
    - That doesn't want to empathize.
    - But wants to criticize.
      - #It's a defense mechanism.
      - #We want to protect ourselves.
      - #We want to believe:
        - \*This could never happen to us.
2. We make the same assumptions the disciples made.
- a. It may be part of our blindness.
    - Things don't happen for no reason.
      - #There must be a law of "cause and effect."
    - Good things happen to good people.
      - #Bad things happen to bad people.
    - We like to see ourselves as good.
      - #We are more likely to see other people as bad.
  - b. Sometimes we do know "why?"
    - If I smoke two packs of cigarettes a day for 40 years.
      - #I develop lung cancer.
        - \*I've got a pretty good idea why.
    - If I eat too much fatty food and don't exercise.
      - #My arteries get clogged up.
        - \*I've got a pretty good idea why.
    - On December 1, 2000.
      - #I broke my arm.
        - #I know why.
          - \*I had been fighting an ongoing battle with squirrels.
            - +If I stood on my patio in the wintertime.
              - +I could see 8 squirrel nests.
                - =In the trees.
                - =In my yard.
            - \*Squirrels would get in the gutters on my house.
              - +I had a plastic gutter guard.
                - =Covered the gutters.
              - +Squirrels would just throw those on the ground.
            - \*I bought some squirrel repellent.
              - +From Dr. Leonard.
                - =Or some such catalog.
              - +It came in little bags.
              - +I put that out.
                - =Squirrels took it.
                  - Made a toy out of it.
                  - Got high on it.
              - #I don't know.

- \*I tried to keep the gutters clean.
  - +Spring.
  - +Fall.
    - =I would get out the ladder.
    - =I would remove the gutter guards.
    - =I would hose out the gutters.
      - I wouldn't say you could eat out of them.
      - But they were clean.
- \*I had just cleaned my gutters.
  - +I came home the next day.
    - =Here was a piece of my gutter guard.
      - Lying on the ground.
  - +I knew there couldn't have been any seeds up there.
    - =For the squirrels to try to eat.
    - =They must have been trying to nest in my gutters.
  - +I am obsessive-compulsive enough.
    - =Not to want to leave my gutter guard.
      - Lying on the ground.
  - +So I immediately got out my ladder.
    - =But not my long wooden ladder.
      - That was too much work.
    - =I got out my aluminum step ladder.
      - I could make do with that.
  - +I set up my step ladder.
    - =Picked up my gutter guard.
    - =Climbed up the ladder.
      - Old ladder.
      - Much older ladder.
        - #Didn't have the warning labels.
          - \*Like the newer ones do.
            - = "DON'T STAND ABOVE THIS STEP."
    - =I had to stand on the very top.
      - After I replaced my piece of gutter guard.
        - #I let go of the gutter.
      - Just then the legs on that ladder began to twist.
        - #At first it was like:
          - \*Everything was in slow motion.
        - #I had time to think:
          - \*"This is not good."
        - #Ladder went down.
          - \*I went down on top of the ladder.
          - \*I landed on my ribs.
            - +It knocked the wind out of me.
            - +I thought I had broken my ribs.

- After I collected my senses.
  - #I got up to go into the house.
    - \*To catch my breath.
- But when I tried to turn the knob.
  - #On the back door.
    - \*I thought I'd broken my wrist.
  - #As it turns out.
    - \*I had broken my arm.
      - +Distal radius.
      - +Right above the wrist.
- \*Why did I end up with a broken arm?
  - +I know why.
    - +Let me count the ways.
      - =I thought I was smarter than the squirrels.
        - Eventually I had a gutter cover installed.
          - #Not Gutter Helmet.
          - #But a similar product.
            - \*Cost about a third as much.
        - So I never cleaned those gutters again.
      - =I was obsessive-compulsive.
        - Not wanting even one piece of gutter guard.
          - #To be out of place.
      - =I had stood on the very top of the ladder.
        - Since we've moved to Tulsa.
          - #I've bought an extension ladder.
          - #So I don't stand on the top of my step ladder.
            - \*Even though now I have a fiberglass one.
              - +Much sturdier than that aluminum one.
    - +So I know why that happened.
      - =At least on a certain level.

c. If we don't know "why?" we try to figure out "why?"

- When I was a hospital chaplain.
  - #I was on the surgery floor one day.
  - #I met an older gentleman.
    - \*About 70 years old.
  - #I asked him why he was in the hospital.
    - \*Thinking he would tell me about:
      - +His gall bladder.
      - +Or whatever it was that was ailing him.
  - #Instead he told me a story.
    - \*When he was a young man of 20.
      - +50 years earlier.
    - \*He had been traveling on a train.
      - +He shared a sleeping compartment with another man.

- \*Next morning.
  - +As he was getting dressed.
  - +He saw the other man's wallet.
    - =Lying on his bunk.
  - +This man had taken that wallet.
    - =He didn't put it in his own pocket.
    - =But he had put it someplace.
      - Where the other man was not likely to find it.
- \*That is why he was in the hospital.
  - +God was punishing him.
    - =For what he had done 50 years before.
- #Bad things happen to bad people.
  - \*So he believed.
  - \*So Jesus' disciples believe.
  - \*So we often believe.

## II. God's Answer.

### A. No One Sinned.

1. Neither this man.
2. Nor his parents.
  - a. Our assumptions get blown out of the water.
    - Good things don't always happen to good people.
    - Bad things don't always happen to bad people.
    - Illness and injury.
      - #Not necessarily a consequence.
        - \*Of any specific sin.
      - #But rather the consequence of living in:
        - \*Broken.
        - \*Fallen.
        - \*Sinful.
          - +World.
  - b. Healing Words.
    - Published by Creative Communications for the Parish.
      - #In St. Louis.
    - Devotional aid for people who are in the hospital.
      - #Last 2-3 pages.
        - \*"Chat with the Chaplain."
          - +Over the years I've written 40 "Chats."
      - #Out of those 40 chats.
        - \*I've gotten feedback on exactly two of them.
          - +I get feedback from the editor.
            - =Friend of mine.

- Who keeps emailing me and saying:
  - # "Write me another one."
- I do when I can.
  - # Even though:
    - \* I'm not a chaplain anymore.
    - \* I haven't been a hospital chaplain.
    - + In almost 11 years.
- I've promised.
  - # As I have time.
  - # As I have ideas.
  - \* I'll keep writing for him.
- \* But from the readers.
  - + I've gotten feedback only two times.
  - = One was very positive.
  - My little piece was:
    - # Helpful.
    - # Moving.
    - # Thought provoking.
  - = Other was on a "Chat" entitled:
    - "Was Jesus Ever Sick?"
    - # I raised the question:
      - \* Since Jesus was human.
      - + God in human form.
    - \* We know he:
      - + Hungered.
      - + Thirsted.
      - + Suffered.
      - + Died.
    - = All part of being human.
  - \* But was he ever sick?
    - + Did he ever get the chicken pox?
    - = Or any other childhood disease?
    - + If he fell down:
      - = Did he get a skinned knee?
  - # I suggested:
    - \* Even though the Scriptures are silent.
    - \* Because:
      - + Jesus was human.
      - + Illness and injury.
      - = Not necessarily a consequence of sin.
    - \* I wouldn't be surprised if Jesus:
      - + Had gotten chicken pox.
      - + Had skinned a knee.

- Wife of the previous editor.
  - #Read my "Chat."
  - #Read her husband the riot act.
    - \*How could I suggest?
      - +That Jesus could have been sick.
    - \*Didn't I know?
      - +Sickness is a result of sin.
      - +Jesus never sinned.
      - +Jesus could never have gotten sick.
- Previous editor.
  - #Also a friend of mine.
    - \*Although now dead.
  - #Took my side.
    - \*Published the "Chat."
  - #Took Jesus' side.
    - \*Who sinned?
      - +That this man was born blind.
    - \*"No one sinned."
      - + "Neither this man."
      - + "Nor his parents."
      - =John 9:3.

B. These Things Happen So That The Work Of God Might Be Revealed.

1. For the blind man.
  - a. When he was healed.
    - His eyes were opened.
    - That was the work of God.
  - b. When he testified concerning the one who healed him.
    - Man called Jesus (11:11).
    - Prophet (11:17).
    - From God (11:33).
    - Son of Man (11:35).
    - Lord (11:38).
    - #Even though it gets him kicked out of the synagogue.
    - \*His eyes of faith were opened.
2. For us.
  - a. When healing comes.
    - Bob McNichol.
    - #Irishman.
    - #From County Mayo.
    - Lost his sight in an industrial accident.
    - #November 2005

-Recently McNichol had his sight restored.

#Doctors took:

\*Tooth.

\*Its root.

\*Part of the jaw.

+Donated by his son Robert.

#Inserted the tooth into his father's right eye socket.

\*Attached the nerve somehow.

#Drilled a hole in the tooth.

\*Inserted an artificial cornea.

#McNichol can see again.

\*That certainly gives a new meaning to "eye teeth."

\*I don't understand how this can work.

\*It's a miracle.

\*It's the work of God.

b. When healing doesn't come.

-When we testify.

#To the one who is the Light of the World.

#To the one whose light of:

\*Love.

\*Mercy.

\*Forgiveness.

\*Salvation.

+Shines in our hearts.

+Shines with the brightness of Easter resurrection.

#Through our care for those who are:

\*Blind.

\*Disabled.

\*Ill.

\*Injured.

-Arthur Carlson gave me such an opportunity.

#Art was a chaplain in Kansas City.

\*He was blind.

#Every three years there is a national conference.

\*For those in specialized ministry.

#Chaplains.

#Pastoral counselors.

\*I would go.

\*Art would go.

#Even though he was blind.

#Braver than I might be.

\*Traveling by himself.

\*Traveling to an unfamiliar city.

#One year we met in Minneapolis.

\*At Augsburg College.

\*In early summer.

+After school was out.

\*It was hot in St. Louis.

+When I packed my suitcase.

+When I dressed for my flight.

\*It had also been hot in Minneapolis.

+But when I landed at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport.

=Cold front had come through.

-I was chilly.

+When I got to Augsburg College.

=Air conditioning was running full blast.

-In the dorm rooms.

=I was freezing.

\*By divine design.

+Art Carlson and I.

=Had been assigned to be roommates.

+Art had brought a sweater.

=In fact, Art had brought two sweaters.

+So we made a deal.

=Art leant me one of his sweaters.

=I became Art's eyes for the weekend.

-I led him to the cafeteria.

#Helped him with his tray.

-I showed him where the bathrooms were.

-I led him to chapel.

-I led him to the plenary gatherings.

-I led him to the workshops.

#Since I was leading a workshop.

\*Art chose to come to my workshop.

\*How convenient!

\*Work of God was revealed.

Concl: Maybe Jesus' disciples asked the wrong question.

Maybe we ask the wrong question.

-Not: "Who sinned?"

-But: "How is God's work to be revealed?"

#To us.

#In us.

#Through us.

-Let it start here.

#In bread and wine.

#Work of God.



