

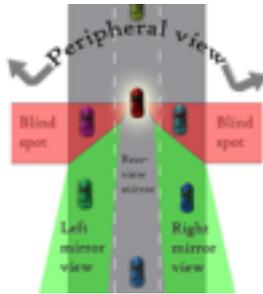
We Are All Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52

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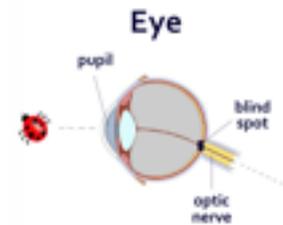
[SLIDE 20] Everyone who learns to drive is introduced to the concept of blind spots — those areas around the vehicle that cannot be observed directly by the driver at the controls. Blind



spots are why we are taught to always shoulder check when changing lanes, and to be aware of when we are driving in someone else's blind spot. Newer cars have sensors that detect the presence of objects in the blind spot, yet backup cameras remind you to always visually check your surroundings before setting the car in motion. **[STEP 1 - these images disappear]**

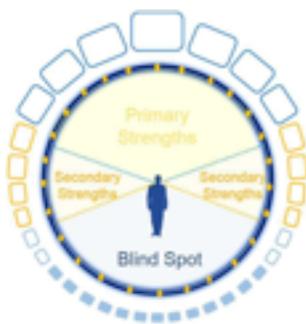


[STEP 2- eye appears] Did you know that we all have a zone of functional blindness? All of us have a physiological blind spot because of the way our eyes are designed. The place in the eye where the optic nerve passes through the retina is completely insensitive to light. There simply are no light detecting cells. It truly is a blind spot. Some mysterious process in our brain provides us with information from the other eye, so that we are not normally aware of our own blindness. Our brains are very effective at compensating for that blind spot.



[STEP 3 - blind spot circle appears]

Our minds do the same thing when we are making decisions in daily life. We like to think that we can stand outside the problems and issues that confront us, that we are able to see all the possible options available to us. **[STEP 4 - eye disappears]**



But the reality is that we are in the middle of our own lives, in the middle of our problems and issues, and we simply do not have a 360 degree view of the situation. Our innate strengths, gifts and talents determine what we see. At best we will see about 65% of all the possible solutions to the problem; at worst no more than 20% of the potential options. We have huge blind spots. This is one reason for living and working together with others who can see the things we can't. Sometimes we have blind spots because we don't have enough information or experience. Increasing knowledge and skills can reduce those blind spots. But some blind spots seem to be very difficult to eliminate. Blind spots that emerge from how we were brought up, and from our experiences in

life. These blind spots show up in our likes and dislikes, in the judgments we make about people and situations, in the prejudices and biases we often don't even realize that we have. **[STEP 5 - 'we don't see' image appears]**



We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are. This is one of the reasons we get so frustrated, angry, and even hostile when someone opposes our views or presents a different perspective on a situation. **[STEP 6 - blind spot circle disappears]**

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are. As St. Paul reminds us, "Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror... All that [we] know now is partial and incomplete..." (1 Corinthians 13:12). We see the world around us as we see ourselves.

And very often we have a distorted view of ourselves — never safe enough, never successful enough, never thin enough, never pretty enough, never strong enough, never fast enough, never masculine enough, never feminine enough, never smart enough, never good enough... never good enough, and so that is how we tend to see the world around us too.

[STEP 7 - image of blind beggar appears]

In one way or another we are all like the blind beggar in our Gospel lesson. Like the blind beggar we have acquired titles and labels, but what do they mean? Do they reflect who we really are? The blind beggar's label is Bartimaeus, a compound of two words. "Bar" the Aramaic word for son, is the title given to the first born, the heir. "Timaeus" could be derived from the Greek word for honor. But Timaeus in Aramaic it means unclean, impure, abominable. We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.



So is this blind beggar the son of honor, someone's honorable heir, or is he someone's unclean, impure son? Did whatever it was that rendered him blind also transform him from an honorable son to being an abomination? Does his label give us a clue about why was he cast out, abandoned to beg by the side of the road? We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are... **[STEP 8 - 'we don't see' image disappears]**

When Bartimaeus learns that Jesus is near he cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Bartimaeus labels Jesus, "son of David," often thought to be a messianic title. But the



Hebrew root of David is beloved, so for the blind man Jesus is the beloved son, the son who is both loved and loving, who shows us what love looks like, what love sounds like, what love does. The one who is abandoned as unclean cries out to the beloved loving son for love. "Jesus, son of love, have mercy on me. Help me to see again." Help me to see again. Help me to be whole so that I can belong once more to a community. **[STEP 9 - painting of crowd with Jesus appears]**

There are two miracles that occur in this gospel lesson. The obvious one is what happens to Bartimaeus. His sight is restored, and he follows Jesus on the way. His life is transformed from blind beggar to man-now-seeing with a community and mission: to help others see Jesus, to help others see as Jesus sees.

The second miracle is what happens to the attitude of the crowd when Jesus turns his attention to this blind beggar. The crowd includes the disciples. If we are to be honest, we must include ourselves. We too are part of that crowd, trying to silence Bartimaeus, sternly warning him to be quiet. Why? Are they, are we, afraid that this son of uncleanness will somehow make Jesus and the group around him, the church, unclean too? Do they — do we see Bartimaeus as someone who is unworthy of Jesus' interest? Do they — do we really imagine that this abandoned blind beggar is really outside the realm of God's love and care?

But notice what happens when Jesus stops, stands still, and asks for the blind man to be brought to him. The same people who were, just minutes before, trying to silence him now call out to Bartimaeus, "Take heart; get up, Jesus is calling you." To take heart is to receive comfort, courage, confidence, and hope. The message of the crowd changes from stern warnings to a declaration of good news: take heart Bartimaeus, the son of love is calling you, inviting you to join him. The crowd sees the blind beggar from a new perspective, through the eyes of Jesus. A blind spot has been removed, and they now see Bartimaeus not as the son of uncleanness, but as an honorable son, worthy of attention and respect, capable of asking for what he needs, a person to be honored because of his faith, because he is one whom Jesus has called and claimed for the kingdom. How many times a day do we need to experience this miracle too?

Please pray with me:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on all of us, blind beggars. Help us to see again. Help us to see you and your mission more clearly. Help us to see the world not as we are, but as you see it. Give us the courage to reach out, to share the good news of your everlasting love. May our speech to one another and to those we meet in our daily lives always be: "take heart, Jesus is here with you and for you, and will never let you go." Amen.