

# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

## Week Four

### Prepare

Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by lighting a candle, signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God. Invite the Holy Spirit to come and speak to you through these words of Scripture and time of meditation and reflection.

### Read

John 9:1–41

Additional Scriptures for this week: 1 Samuel 16:1–13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8–14

### Reflect

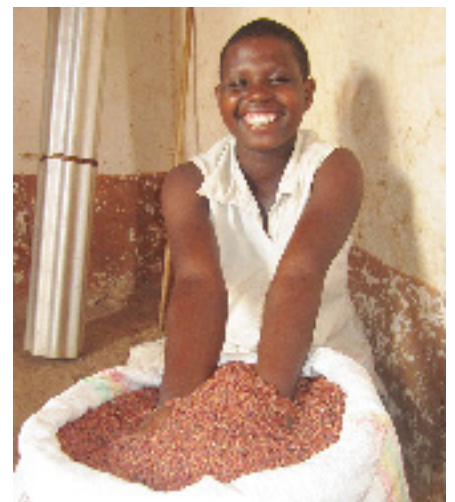
In this fourth week of Lent, each of the Scripture passages have powerful themes related to the kingdom of God: light and darkness; power and weakness; sight and blindness. At the heart of each of these is choosing to see others the way God sees us, a task that is incredibly difficult for our finite human selves. However, as we have seen in the stories of Zoe orphans and in the stories of Scripture over the last three weeks, true faith transforms us so that we see others through the lens of Christ.

The story from the Gospel of John for this week tells what is probably one of the most well-known of Jesus' miracles: healing the blind. Though you may have heard similar stories told multiple times and preached in different ways, the narrative in chapter 9 of John's Gospel presents some unique details that bring the story to life in a new way. In contrast to some of the other accounts of Jesus healing the blind, this story includes an extended account of the healing, the Pharisees' reaction of disbelief and investigation, and discussion with Christ about what it all means. This does not seem to be simply another one of Jesus' miracles. For John, this story carries much more importance and should be carefully considered.

The blind man's awareness that Jesus had unique power highlights the key theme of this passage: blindness is not simply one's physical ability to see or not see, but whether we recognize the revelation of the works of God in Christ Jesus. This is precisely the irony that runs through this story. The Pharisees, who are supposed to be the most religious and therefore pious Jews, end up missing out on the very Messiah that they have been waiting for, who is standing right in front of them!

Though we may be tempted to think that we would have been able to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, and avoid the prideful mistakes of the Pharisees, there are many other ways our own lives are also guided by blind spots rather than clarity of vision. Thankfully, we are able to reflect on Jesus revealed as the Son of God in the stories of Scripture, in the tradition of the church, and in our experience of living as the body of Christ in our own communities. Each of these sources, guided by the Holy Spirit, contribute to conforming our minds to the mind of Christ, and open our eyes to the blind spots we are not otherwise likely to see.

One living example of the power Christ has to open our eyes is found in Eve, a Zoe orphan living in Rwanda. Like so many other children in her community, she lost both of her parents at a very young age. Though Eve had been taken in by



an orphanage and had most of her basic needs met, she never learned how to support herself on her own. Sadly, she did not know the love God had for her.

Though Eve went to live with an elderly woman who became her foster mom, the woman did not have the resources to support them both, and Eve was soon forced to beg for food and work on the streets. She tried to go to school in order to better herself, but the other children made fun of her. She was often sick, hungry, raggedly dressed, and lacked the materials needed for class. Understandably, Eve grew bitter toward the other children who had two parents and who had the resources to get through daily life.

Thankfully, Eve found Zoe Empowers and was able to learn the skills necessary to support her and her foster mom. She was amazed to meet other orphans who had been through similar challenges, and she was transformed by the experience of working together with her friends in the Working Group community. Most importantly, Eve learned of the love God has for her and the hope that is found in Christ. She regularly attends the village church and has left behind any bitterness toward children who have both parents. As Eve put it, she “has learned to love all children, even those with parents.” Thanks to the love of God, Eve’s eyes have been opened to the blind spot of bitterness that could have bogged her down with anger and prevented her from finding joy. Now, Eve sees with clarity the hope she has for the future in Christ.

**Reflection questions:**

1. How do you see yourself in each of the characters of the passage from John (the blind man, the Pharisees, Christ)? How can you relate to Eve’s story of God opening her eyes to a blind spot in her life?
2. What ways is your mind being conformed to the mind of Christ and what steps do you take to make this happen? Who do you have in your life to help you see potential blind spots?

**Pray**

Respond by speaking or writing out a prayer to God, or use the prayer below as a starting point:

Most holy God, we thank you for sending your Son to embody the life of transformation that you desire us to have. Lord, in your mercy, help our eyes to be opened to the blind spots of our lives, and give us the courage to allow your light to shine in. Grant that we may live by the guidance of your Spirit today and always, that our minds might become more conformed to the mind of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Act**

Eve’s story provides a wonderfully relatable example of the ways our blind spots may be bitterness or un-forgiveness toward others. Eve also shows us what it looks like when we allow the love of God to shape our hearts and lives, leading us to see others clearly through the lens of Christ, which casts out bitterness and resentment. If you feel as though there is someone whom you struggle to forgive, pray for God to help you see the other person in the light of Christ and to give you the strength to seek reconciliation in that relationship. If you cannot think of a specific person, pray for God to shed light on the ways you judge other people or fail to see them as a brother or sister in Christ.

In addition to seeking out our own areas of blindness, we are called to spread the light of Christ into our dark world. Consider the ways you might be able to shine hope and joy to those around you. It can be as simple as looking your cashier in the eye at the grocery store and engaging them as a child of God, or calling an old friend to let them know you are thinking about them and praying for them in this season of Lent. Try to find at least one way to actively spread Christ’s hope each day this week!

**Learn**

To learn more about Zoe Empowers and the ways our organization partners with orphans in Africa, visit [www.zoempowers.org](http://www.zoempowers.org)!