

**“Am I Close Enough With God?”**  
**By Brother Kenneth Ray**  
**Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Good morning, everyone, it's good to be back with you this morning. Several of you shared how much you enjoyed having our general pastor, Pastor Paine here last week. My favorite part of Pastor Paine's message was about the man who had the best boat and the best fishing gear, but never caught anything because he never put his boat in the water. God wants us to go out deep, and to get close to Him.

*John 9:35-36 ...who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?*

Is that a good question, or just a strange question? that depends.

*John 9:37-38 ...Lord, I believe*

Let's take a look: What do we know about this man? First, we read that he was blind, and was so from birth.

*John 9:1 ...blind from his birth.*

He had never enjoyed seeing the many colors and designs of the things around him; he had never seen the colors of a beautiful flower, he had never seen a white Christmas, he had never seen the colors of clothing (which, in some cases, was a good thing). We also know that his blindness was not punishment for his or his parents' sins (John 9:2-3). We know that God is good all the time, but bad things happen. The Bible says that it rains on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). He didn't ask Jesus for help, the help was freely given (John 9:4-6). The blind man didn't know who Jesus was.

Jesus was very close with His Father. Have you ever told somebody to do something, and they needed you to explain to them exactly how to do it? Have you ever been told to do something, but because you knew how to do your job, you knew how to do it, and didn't need anybody to tell you how to do it? Jesus didn't need to be told what to do.

The blind man acted on blind faith when Jesus told him to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:7). Trust good intentions. Malcolm says to me, "Try this." I have two choices; I can say "What? Why would you even say that to me, Malcolm?" and he would say, "I was just trying to help..." or I can try it, and I might find out that was exactly what I needed. I imagine that must have been what it was like for the blind man.

Now he comes back seeing after washing. Right away his neighbors see the difference. They asked, "How did this happen?"

*John 9:11 ...and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

Now I come from a little town, with a big sense of community. As a matter of fact, next week I'm going to bring in a bag of "Community" brand coffee from my home

state. I'm just giving you some advance warning. Anyway, where I come from, everyone would have been happy for this man. They wasn't happy. To some degree, they are in disbelief. They were not Southerners. They put him on trial. Who did this to you? They questioned whether the man was even blind. They went so far as to bring in the man's parents and ask them (John 9:18). So, they tried to discredit Jesus. I have experienced that. God did something great, and people tried to mock or vilify me for it. They had no interest in God. They could not feel the jubilation. So they found this man's parents. They said, yes, he is our son; yes, he was blind; yes, he sees; we don't know how (John 9:20-1). Ask him, he'll tell you; he is of age. This they did out of fear, because they didn't want to get kicked out of the synagogue (John 9:22). Live for Christ; when you are close to him, you don't have to be afraid of church (or religious people).

So now they try to discredit Jesus. Give God the praise, for we know that this man is a sinner (John 9:24). Who isn't? God still uses sinners. I am a sinner; a sinner saved by Grace. But all he knows is what he knows: "...sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25).

Sometimes that's literally, and sometimes that's figuratively. You can be in a Bible study and have God open your eyes. I was watching a football game one time, yelling a screaming, and God spoke to my heart, and said, "You're not close enough to me." Sometimes we weave in and we weave out. Sometimes people stop coming to church or don't come to an event because they don't agree with something that someone said. Sometimes people talk with other people in the congregation about the fellowship leader, instead of praying to God about it.

So they question him again (John 9:26), and he tells them, "I already told you what He did; if I tell you again, will you hear it again?" (John 9:27) and then he asks them, "Will you also be His disciples?" Now it really gets bad. That's like asking a Ford lover to buy a Chevy. They reviled him. "We are Moses' disciples, because we know that God spoke to him. As for this fellow, we know not whence he is" (John 9:28-29). And the answer? "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet (HELLO!) he hath opened mine eyes" (John 9:30). "If this man were not of God, He couldn't do this" (John 9:33). They fought back, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out (John 9:34). This is where we came in.

In contrast, in Mark 8:9, Peter said, "Thou art the Christ." In Matthew 16:16, Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." In John 6:69, Peter said, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

What was the difference for Peter in his answers and the blind man in his answer? Jesus was around the blind man, but, even though Jesus came to the blind man and healed him, he didn't know Him, because he was not close to Him. Peter was close to Jesus, not just around Him. How close Jesus was in Peter's life made all the difference.

Even when Peter said, "I go a fishing," when he shouldn't have (John 21:3), and did it the wrong way, Jesus came to him and showed him that he was on his own program; he'd been fishing all night and caught nothing (John 21:5). Jesus told him to cast the nets on the right side of the boat (John 21:6) and when they did that, they caught fishes of all kinds. He was showing Peter that he was to catch not only of fish, but of mankind, from every nation under the sun (Matthew 28:19).