

“Can a blind person guide a blind person?” (Luke 6:39). It all depends on what we mean by blind.

I was watching an old episode of Death Valley Days in which a man was blinded. He was trying to help another man who had suffered an injury to his leg. Both were trying to escape trouble and so staying in place was not really an option since they were in the wide open and danger was imminent. The blind man needed to support the man who could not walk on his own. And the man with the injured leg could see so both were able to help one another.

Growing up, we had a three-foot wooden fork on the wall. It was used for decorative purposes and served as a conversation starter when guests came for dinner. Then one day I heard a story in a homily explaining the difference between heaven and hell. The forks in hell are three feet long. There is great agony and suffering because one can almost taste the food that is set before them, but with a three-foot fork, there is never a way to feed oneself. In heaven, the same food is present, and the same utensils. One person helps another, and so while one cannot feed himself, he can help the person across the table from him. Likewise, the other person sitting across the table can extend the same courtesy so that both can eat and enjoy.

My favorite story of a blind person helping others to see, is not a fictional story. Chris Downey was 45 when he lost his sight. He needed his vision to work as an architect, so he was at quite a loss when he went blind. Oftentimes, physical setbacks in life can lead us into depression and a feeling that we can no longer contribute. We lose our freedom and must rely on others for basic needs. The transition was difficult, but Chris was determined to learn how to see with his other senses and to continue his vocation as an architect. When a recession hit and he lost his job, another door opened. With a heightened sense of hearing, and a new employer, he began to design spaces for people who were blind. His first job was designing a rehabilitation center for veterans who lost their sight. Chris explains: “It took my disability and turned it upside down. All of a sudden, it defined unique, unusual value that virtually nobody else had to offer.” Chris Downey’s life is filled with joy because he is able to experience life in a new way and to use his blindness to help others who are blind to see life the way he experiences it. He is absolutely convinced he is a better architect now, than when he was able to see.ⁱ

When Jesus asks the question, “Can a blind person guide a blind person?” he is not trying to pick on those who have lost their physical sight. He is highlighting the fact that when we find fault with others, we are often blind to our own sins. And those sins may be much larger than the fault we find with others. Before we try to point out the faults of another, we need to take stock of our own faults and failings. And if we are truly blind to our own sin, we will never see it.

Amidst the pandemic, you may have noticed you are quick to find fault with others. The quirks of others, whether they be familiar family and friends or total strangers, seem to be more noticeable. Likewise, your own faults are magnified, and others become easily upset with you as well. What are we to do?

There is a limit to what any one individual sees, but if we ask for the help and assistance of others, our field of vision can be much wider. That is why the parables that Jesus tells are so powerful. Reflecting on how they apply to our own life and situation, we may start to see our own sinfulness more clearly. What a gift! Like Chris Downey, we can begin to see in a new way. After some difficult transition, we may even be able to experience life in a new and more joyful way, more tolerant of others, and more aware of how our own imperfections provoke others.

ⁱ [cbsnews.com/news/architect-chris-downey-goes-blind-says-hes-actually-gotten-better-at-his-job-60-minutes](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/architect-chris-downey-goes-blind-says-hes-actually-gotten-better-at-his-job-60-minutes)