

# blind spots

What you  
don't see can  
hurt you.

TIM RIDDLE & FIL ANDERSON

“One of the greatest gifts God has given to humans is the capacity for self-knowledge. We can navel-gaze into our own being like no animal ever dreamed. The capacity for self-awareness is both a blessing and a curse. If we are open to our blind spots, it is a blessing. If we deceive ourselves regarding who we are, it is a curse. Tim and Fil are working from the blessing side. Go with them.”

**Dan Boone**, President, Trevecca Nazarene University

“It will take courage to read this book. It’s uncomfortable to consider weakness. I’d much rather live in denial. In *Blind Spots*, Tim and Fil offer groundbreaking insights and help in not only identifying what you cannot see—but also finding freedom to move toward the person you want to be.”

**Tim Stevens**, Vice President of Consulting, Vanderbloemen;  
author of *Marked by Love: A Dare to Walk Away from Judgment and Hypocrisy*

“Reading Tim and Fil’s book feels like a conversation with a trusted friend. You can hear the tones of their caring voices in the stories they tell because they’re stories they’ve lived. You can sense their profound wisdom as they bring Scripture to life because they have been transformed by God’s Word. And somehow, while revealing the ugly realities of our blind spots, and telling us the truth that is hard to hear, their words make their readers feel known and loved. Read it and be changed.”

**Drew Hill**, Pastor; author of *Alongside: Loving Teenagers with the Gospel*

“Jesus says that when we can see things clearly, our whole life will be full of light. That’s precisely where Fil Anderson and Tim Riddle plunge into our smudged existence to help. With hard-won insight, they bring focus and clarity to critical matters that our hurry, self-deception, and pure thoughtlessness often turn to a muddled blur. In helping us attend to what we often miss, *Blind Spots* offers a gift as precious as sight.”

**Jedd Medefind**, President, Christian Alliance for Orphans

“Only the most brazen and foolish presume they are fully self-aware. Most mere mortals know there are countless ways we fail to see what we need to know about ourselves. But how do you know what you can’t see? Blind spots are a problem that leave us knowing we are significantly near or farsighted without the glasses to correct our vision. Tim Riddle and Fil Anderson have written a compelling and honest book that offers light to fill the spaces we can’t see. What we can’t see can kill us or our jobs, marriages, and friendships, but when we learn to see, it opens our eyes to wonder about how Jesus pursues us even in the midst of our refusal to see. *Blind Spots* is a brilliant gift to anyone who longs to let the truth set them free.”

**Dan B. Allender**, Christian therapist; author; speaker focusing on sexual abuse and trauma recovery; professor of counseling psychology; founding president of The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology

“*Blind Spots* is a short and wonderfully narrative take on our pervasive lack of self-clarity. Practical and personal stories provide a lens to open our eyes to things others see about us that we miss. I think of how Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper, ‘I have many things to say to you that you cannot yet bear. But when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will lead you into all truth.’ I am so grateful that this book gives the opportunity to bear more truth and see ourselves anew. Reading *Blind Spots* was Jesus’s invitation to address blind spots that sabotage my relationships. It gave efficient ways to participate with God’s Spirit in responding to truth about myself.”

**Adele Calhoun**, Pastor of Spiritual Formation, Highrock Covenant Church; author; spiritual director; retreat leader; pilgrimage leader; certified Enneagram instructor

“The very thought that there is something unseen in me that hinders my intimacy with Jesus, or deters my true self from emerging, is what compels me to read *Blind Spots*. The insight, challenge, and practical help offered, combined with the Holy Spirit’s work within, revealed several of my personal ‘blind spots’ to keep exploring. Thank you, Fil and Tim.”

**Ty Saltzgeber**, Author of *My First 30 Quiet Times* and numerous other titles; husband; father; speaker; mentor

“Did you know there is a difference between looking and seeing? So many of us spend lots of time looking without ever really seeing. In *Blind Spots*, Tim and Fil take an honest and profoundly authentic look at some of the places that keep us blind, groping in the dark. Bringing light to dark places, Tim and Fil not only expose our blind spots but help us move toward truth, freedom, boldness, and strength. A must-read!”

**John Wagner**, Young Life SVP Global Cities; author of *Perfect: Sacred Stories from the Heart of a Dad*

“It’s often said that ‘seeing is believing.’ However, in *Blind Spots*, I learned just the opposite—that believing is seeing. That regarding the things we can’t see about ourselves, we only develop twenty-twenty vision when we’ve been lovingly seen by a chosen few and by the One whose gaze of affection and acceptance sets us free. After reading this treasure of a book written by Tim Riddle and Fil Anderson, I finally understand why St. Paul asked God to ‘open the eyes of our hearts.’”

**Michael John Cusick**, Author of *Surfing for God*; CEO at Restoring the Soul

“In these pages, you’ll find the authors diligently and honestly trying to uncover and address a crucial topic. In so doing, they successfully offer a helpful start to the lifelong and freeing practice of journeying with God to discover, reveal, and attend to reality. Many will find this book to be a great help. Your loved ones will be glad you read it.”

**Nathan Foster**, Director of Community Life, Renovaré; author of *The Making of an Ordinary Saint*

“*Blind Spots* is so much more than just a book. It is a mirror through which we can see our souls. With truth and grace, the authors hold up this mirror for us to take a deep look at what needs to be addressed in our own lives. I wish I had read this book decades ago. I’d be a better man, and now I have that invitation to become a better version of myself and you do too! Sometimes the truth can be too hard to accept. But in this book, we find that the truth sets us free. By first knowing our blind spots, then having them brought to the light, we can see our way more clearly to walk with confidence into the future to experience all God has for us.”

**Stephen W. Smith**, President and Spiritual Director of Potter’s Inn; author of *The Lazarus Life* and *Soul Custody*

“In my forty years of being a pastor, it would have been so instructive and helpful to have this book. As it has been said, ‘Sin blinds, it binds, and it grinds.’ We all need a different set of eyes to see what we are missing. This book helps leaders to pay attention to the necessary internal work leaders need to do to serve and love their communities faithfully. Tim and Fil illustrate a critical topic for healthy, wholehearted leadership and share their stories with insight and wisdom.”

**Clyde L. Godwin**, Director for The Barnabas Center Triad

# BLIND SPOTS



# BLIND SPOTS

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE  
CAN HURT YOU

Tim Riddle & Fil Anderson





New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404  
www.newgrowthpress.com  
Copyright © 2019 by Tim Riddle and Fil Anderson

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version.® Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from *The Holy Bible*, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked CEV are taken from the Contemporary English Version. Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *The Message* (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

Cover Design: Faceout Books, faceoutstudio.com  
Interior Typesetting and eBook: Lisa Parnell, lparnell.com

ISBN: 978-1-948130-59-2 (Print)  
ISBN: 978-1-948130-60-8 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data on File

Printed in South Korea

26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19      1 2 3 4 5

# Contents

Foreword	xiii
Acknowledgments	xvii
Introduction: A few thoughts before you begin reading	1
Chapter 1: How the Journey Began	4
Chapter 2: What Are Blind Spots?	18
Chapter 3: Why Are They Blind?	31
Chapter 4: Is This a New Problem?	44
Chapter 5: Seeing Ourselves and Others as Jesus Sees Us	58
Chapter 6: What Jesus Says about Seeing and Speaking the Truth	74
Chapter 7: How Do I Break Free of Blind Spots?	90
Chapter 8: How Do I Prevent My Blind Spots from Returning?	103
Chapter 9: Eliminating Blind Spots	117
Endnotes	133



## Dedication

(Tim)

To my wife, Stacy.

You've been my rock for thirty-three years.

You have loved me well and been incredibly supportive throughout our journey together. Thanks for being my first eyes and proofreader with every chapter I completed.

Your encouragement always motivated me to keep writing.

I love you dearly!

To my children; Ragan, Carly, Fletcher, and Ellie.

What a blessing! Thanks for being excited for me when I first shared the idea and thanks for your encouragement and confidence that I could do this, with God's help of course!

I love you more than you know!

To Harold and Ella Riddle, my mom and dad.

You left this earth way too soon but oh how you influenced me well for thirty-one years. You provided the foundation for who I am today, and you instilled the confidence in me never to stop pursuing my dreams as long as God was leading the way!

(Fil)

To Lucie, my soul mate and best friend,  
who knows me intimately, loves me regardless,  
and is willing to be completely honest with me  
about my blind spots.



## Foreword

My father sold used cars. Consequently, we rode in all kinds of automotive makes and models during my childhood. I vividly recall my father's emphasis upon checking his blind spot. Since the cars were always shifting, so were the blind spots. A sporty fastback might obscure his vision much more than a big, wide station wagon. Sometimes a few adjustments in a rear-view mirror were sufficient. At other times, he needed our assistance, another set of eyes in the backseat to know it was safe to proceed.

Tim Riddle and Fil Anderson offer both the mirrors and the eyes we need to identify our blind spots. What we don't see can definitely hurt us—professionally, interpersonally, and in our spirit. The prophet Jeremiah admonished those “who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not” (Jeremiah 5:21 NKJV). Ezekiel described a rebellious house “which has eyes to see but does not see” (Ezekiel 12:2 NKJV). Jesus hearkened back to the words of Isaiah, decrying a people who have grown dull; “their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed” (Matthew 13:15 NKJV). This book considers the cost of such blind spots.

## BLIND SPOTS

Clarity of vision is a prerequisite for long-term discipleship. How do we become those who Jesus describes as “blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear” (Matthew 13:16 NKJV)? I am grateful to Tim and Fil for leaning into biblical stories of healing, where scales fall from a blind man’s eyes. Fil and Tim communicate how much we need each other to root out our blind spots, to provide a corrective mirror. They also confess their own shortcomings, acknowledging their blind spots, calling us all to self-examination.

This book snapped me back to painful moments of revelation over thirty years ago. I was among a small group of students at Davidson College who volunteered to be part of an exercise during Reverend Charles King’s seminar on racial reconciliation. I had plenty of African-American friends, so I felt confident I could display my understanding on racial justice issues. During the exercise, I found my hackles rising. He seemed to be treating some people in the circle differently than others, listening thoughtfully to some group members and brusquely cutting others short. My frustration rose. I pointed out the inequity in how he was treating some of us. He appeared indifferent, even blaming me for raising objections and causing problems. I completely lost whatever cool I’d brought into the circle.

Only then did Dr. King reveal his ruse. He’d set up social rules that worked against Caucasians. In his circle, the social construct favored black people over white people. And in just fifteen minutes, I was ready to rebel, primed for a battle, raging against injustice. How might a lifetime of inequality feel? How much rage would boil within students who had been judged, demeaned, shut down because of the color of the skin rather than the content of their character? Never before had I really stepped

## Foreword

into African-American shoes. Suddenly, I understood a little better. My blind spot had been revealed, in public. I was far weaker than I imagined. More prone to anger than I'd guessed. And blind to the cost of racism, how it robs people of dignity and self-worth. Some blind spots are personal. Others are cultural. All include hidden costs. What else lurks beneath the surface, smoothed over when things go well but poised towards self-destruction or pointing fingers when circumstances change?

Tim and Fil invite us into a long-term project, discipleship rooted in deep heart work. Given how enmity trumps empathy in our public discourse, now is the time to examine our blind spots. Can we pause to identify the log in our own eye before pointing out the speck in our brothers and sisters? How great that Tim and Fil provide such honest correction for each other. They invite us into their wise and trustworthy process. How grateful I am for their encouragement to consider our own blindness. How else will we mature in faith and character? It is far too easy to sleep walk through life, seeing but not recognizing, listening but not truly hearing. A revelatory wake-up can arrive via Scripture, a sermon, a look, a hug, a movie, a song, or a book like this. *Blind Spots* is an opportunity for God to love us boldly, for Jesus to confront us gently, for the Spirit to sharpen our sight.

Enjoy the refining journey!

Craig Detweiler  
President, The Seattle School  
of Theology and Psychology  
November 2018





## Acknowledgments

(Tim)

Thanks to my team at SMC; Suzanne, Connie, Tyler, Jessica, Karen, and Rena (TT). I still remember the day I shared with all of you that Fil and I were writing a book together. The smiles on your faces and your excitement meant more to me than you know.

Thanks to the leadership of SMC for allowing me the freedom to write when I needed those blocks of time.

Thanks to SMC for shaping my leadership over the past fourteen years which influenced the writing of this book.

Thanks to Joanne Soliday, my friend and Bible teaching partner. You were the first person I talked to about the possibility of writing. We have dreamed a lot together over the years.

Thanks to Adam Tarwacki. There are some relationships that life would not be the same without. When I decided to start a new chapter in my life, Discover Blind Spots, you said, “I will do whatever I can to help you.” For that, I will always be grateful. Thanks for your friendship over these years.

## BLIND SPOTS

Thanks to my writing partner Fil Anderson. You have been my spiritual mentor for many years now. I still remember the day I walked into your office and said: “Tell me about writing.” Then you prayed that prayer and the rest is history! You have encouraged me more than you know. I could not have done it without you. Thanks for mentoring me throughout this process. Also, thanks for being my blind spot accountability partner and for showing me what it truly looks like to love Jesus!

(Fil)

I don’t know who said it first, but I’m sure it’s true: *If you ever see a turtle on a fence post, you can know it had some help getting there.* In other words, we don’t accomplish anything in life alone. That’s certainly been my experience co-authoring this book.

This book *Blind Spots* was Tim Riddle’s original idea and an excellent one, at that. Thank you, Tim, for inviting me to join you in this rigorous, life-giving endeavor. I cherish your friendship and trust.

Thank you, New Growth Press, for believing in our message enough to invest your valuable resources into the publication of this book. Thank you especially for providing us with the outstanding assistance provided by Barbara Juliani, Ruth Castle, and Sue Lutz.

Thank you to Craig Detweiler for his eloquent foreword and other people, for whom my admiration is immense, who were willing to read our manuscript and offer their generous words of endorsement.

Whatever else remains a blind spot, one thing I see clearly: my contributions to this book were not mine alone. The insights and inspiration of many writers, teachers, and friends are so integral that, except for a few personal experiences I’ve cited, countless people have

## Acknowledgments

contributed to its writing. That notwithstanding, I'd like to thank the following people especially.

I am profoundly grateful for the Board of Directors of my ministry platform, Journey Resources, for their relentless devotion and confidence in me. Also, the many individuals who have faithfully and generously partnered with me as I do everything I can to offer the message of God's unconditional and limitless love for all people everywhere.

Thank you to the extraordinary pastoral team (Bob, Ben, Angela, Jeromy, Nick, and Jarm), staff, leadership, and members of St. Mark's Church, Burlington, NC, for encouraging me by your example, strengthening me by your prayers, and granting me the privilege of serving as your spiritual formation pastor.

Thank you, Mike and Susie, Bill and Joann, Steve and Robin, and Johnny (Sue, now deceased), for doing life together, so faithfully, with Lucie and me. You've provided a safe place to shed our tears, express our disappointments, expose our failures, and celebrate our joys.

Thank you, Notorious Sinners (you know who you are), for rivaling all others in the ways you have exposed your blind spots and helped me to see more of my own. The same goes to you, Mike Fowler and Rod Mortenson.

Thank you, Reality Ministries, North Street Community, and Corner House family for the ways you reflect God's compassionate heart for humanity by creating spaces with no margins where everyone is accepted, valued, and celebrated. You've uniquely assisted me in seeing priceless things that I've been blind to for most of my life.

Thank you, Mom, Linda, Steve, and Susan, for loving me unconditionally, through every stage of my life, despite my many blind spots.

## BLIND SPOTS

God said, “A man’s greatest treasure is his wife, she is a gift from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22 CEV). Thank you, Lucie, for being my greatest treasure. Thank you, Lord, for the gift.

The three greatest treasures my life with Lucie has produced are our children. They are my greatest heroes. Our daughter has one of the most courageous yet most tender hearts I’ve ever known. I admire her compassion. I love you, Meredith, and I love Gabe, who wisely sees you as his greatest treasure. Corinne, you are precious, and I love you too. Our son Will is bright and devoted to living his life fully with integrity. I admire his determination. I love you, Will, and I love Katie, who is your greatest treasure. Collins, you are precious, and I love you too. Our son Lee relentlessly desires to generously and selflessly give his life away. I admire his sense of justice and compassionate love for others, especially those on the fringes. I love you, Lee.