

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: After having stayed in Samaria for two days, Jesus ventured back to His hometown of Galilee. During this journey, Jesus arrived at Cana, where He performed His first public miracle—turning the water into wine. There, He encountered a government official whose son was very sick, who begged Jesus to help and to heal Him. It was the passionate plea of a desperate father seeking any help he could get; and the One of True Help was right there in his midst! Jesus started to follow him to where the sick child was, in Capernaum. Yet, Jesus was perplexed and even upset that people just wanted a show of signs and wonders without the real Wonder that went with it. They wanted the show without the substance. Since this is where Jesus grew up, where He and His father had their carpentry business, and where people knew Him as the carpenter, they were not willing to see Him as more than a carpenter. They did not show belief or the essential, forerunning aspect that goes before faith. Jesus saw the faith in this official but not in his own people. Then, He told him to go ahead home, where his son had been healed, as Jesus said, *your son will live*, and the official saw this become fact. In so doing, his faith was not just mere belief; it was faith and reason that spread to his entire family.

Contexts and Background:

The coming chapters will testify what real true healing is all about, that Jesus nailed our debt of sin to the Cross! He paid a debt that we could never afford to do by any means conceivable—not by works, or ideas, or experiences, or education, or service, or being good. If these things could add even an insignificant amount to our debt of grace, then Christ's work on the cross would have been unnecessary and meaningless because we could have done it on our own! Our saving faith is by Christ alone—nothing to add, and nothing to declare except to receive His most precious free gift of grace by our faith alone—period! The question inlaid in this passage is *what will we do now? How then shall we live?*

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Cana... Capernaum.* These townships were about 20 miles from each other, a full day's walk. Capernaum was a large city while Cana was one of several fishing villages between three and nine miles from Nazareth. This was the home of Mary and Joseph and their family, including Jesus; it is where He grew up and had His carpentry business. The people had a curiosity about Jesus, but not a faith in Him. These very same people whom Jesus grew up around and where he performed these astonishing miracles would soon celebrate Him—and then, would try to kill Him. In a couple of years, these people will say *Hosanna!* on Monday and seek to crucify Him on Friday (Mark 5:21; 6:1-6; Luke 4: 18-30; John 2:24-25).
- *Royal official/official/nobleman.* This would be a person who worked as a court official for Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (king) of Galilee (4 BC – 30AD). He would be like a chief of staff to a president. For this man to come to Jesus, he would have had to really humble himself. He would have been a rich, well-connected aristocrat, possibly Greek and/or a Roman citizen who was not a practicing Jew or a person of faith. This person wielded a lot of power and had all the connections and money, yet none of these could help him. He was not even in a position to request the help of Jesus because He is not interested in power, position, or money; none of these things mattered to Him, yet He had mercy and helped him. Was it the man's desperation that led him to Jesus or was it an act of faith? Whatever it was, faith is what came about from his encounter with Jesus. It is interesting to point out that Jesus' execution would be approved by this man's employer, of whom Jesus often spoke against, yet He still helped him and his son. I wonder if he was there at Jesus mock trial, torture, and crucifixion? If so, what did he see, what did he think and feel, what did he do or not do as the One who mercifully and miraculously healed his son was unmercifully murdered to give mankind the real miracle of salvation. What did he think and do when He was raised from the grave (Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 13:32; 23:7-9; Acts 2:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:22; James 2:8)?

- *Begged Him/implored Him.* In the Greek, the grammar indicates this man repeatedly begged Jesus, showing his desperation. He may have not revered Him or cared about Who He was, but somehow his extreme anxiety became gratitude that motivated a faith to be planted and grow and to spread (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10).
- *Come/come down.* Referred to the trek that Capernaum was downhill from Cana.
- *Heal.* Health is the state of our bodies and the greater health need is that of our soul. If this boy had not been healed, he would have died. If we do not accept the real healing of our Lord—our salvation—we too will die in a more permanent and profound sense. It seems Jesus' reputation at this time was that of a miracle healer, not the coming Messiah. This official knew about Jesus the healer and he needed one desperately. But what Jesus was seeking from him and his hometown folks was a simple faith. Not a faith built upon a show or the shallow substances of signs, but rather a complete faith that trusts in God.
- *Unless.* A rebuke and a challenge. The official took the challenge that Jesus' own people seemed not to.
- *Signs and wonders.* Refers to God's confirmation of Jesus' mission as He used supernatural activities (beyond our limited knowledge and comprehension) to demonstrate and prove His Deity and mission so people could put their faith in Him. They were also used in Acts and the Epistles to show the authority of the Apostles and those sent by God to heal people who were sick beyond current medical knowledge. This was the authentic witness and proof of God. Signs never point to themselves; their power and purpose never was and will not ever be to wow and entertain. When others use them, they are never to point to the person or the preacher or performer; rather, they must point to the Person and Work of Christ and glorify Him. When the manifestations become center stage, we miss the point of them by placing the focus on the delivery of the message while ignoring the message (Acts 2:4-12, 22, 43; 3:7-9, 11-12, 16; 4:30; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:4-12; Heb. 2:1-4).
- *Never believe.* Meaning unbelief, a deep refusal to see or to trust. Faith—as in believing in Jesus and then trusting in Him—is the essential aspect that opens our heart part to receive His election and apply His redemption into our lives. Without a trusting belief, you have nothing. In spite of the unbelief of the crowd and the perhaps misguided motivation of the official, Jesus healed this man's son and the word spread even though the people did not directly see it accomplished (Matt. 16:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:22).
- *Took Jesus at his word.* This man merely heard and then believed, a template for us today since we do not have Jesus physically here with us. We have His Word in Spirit and in Truth and we too are to hear the Gospel and believe it. Jesus did not go with him; this could have caused quite a crisis, yet he had more faith than Jesus' own people!
- *Servants met him.* Confirmation! What went through this man's mind? Did he lose hope or did he really believe? A simple question confirmed the timing and that this was of Jesus and no other reason. This man's faith was based on reason that was verified and then resulted in a faith that was spiritually convicting.
- *Fever.* Some form of an infection or disease that caused the boy's body temperature to raise way beyond normal and panic his parents.
- *Seventh hour.* Roman time would be 7 p.m.; Jewish time would be 1 p.m. John uses Roman time in his Gospel.
- *Your son will live.* This long-distance miracle was rare in the O.T. as the performer, magicians, or prophets were normally always present. This sets Jesus apart, making Him an extraordinary miracle worker who was unprecedented in both Jewish and Greek lore. This is what "word of faith" really means, Christ is the Word who gives the word; it is Christ who has the power and authority to heal. He

does not have to be there; His words are all it takes to heal someone. Then, when that healing is done and complete, it will continue to impact a person deeply—in faith and in life that will echo past death. This was no wish or mere hope or some stage performance that is pretended or faked like you see people doing today; rather, this was real. This boy was going to die; now he had recovered completely because of Christ. This shows us that Jesus has the power to make life and now give life (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).

- *Household believed.* This official probably was a secular Jew or a Roman, judging by his position. The official saw a real miracle; he was not looking for a show, but for tangible reality of a loving and caring God. His faith progressed deeper and deeper as more of Christ was revealed to him. Then, he shared this with the people who were the closest. If Jesus has the power of life, then He also has the power to save and the power to empower us to live out our life with faith (John 20:31).
- *Second miraculous sign.* Jesus performed many miracles that are not recorded; this is the second public sign that He did in Galilee. It was meant to point to Him as the Promised Messiah, that only God could bend matter and will in this way. The first miracle was to help a newly married couple and the second was to help a child. Jesus starts with the family, and as we can see in this passage, it is the family where faith is to flow first and foremost (John 2:11, 23; 5:19-30).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

John chapter four is asking us if we should choose to do what is right or what others say is right? Do we go outside of our own cultural and racial boundaries so we can relate to others? We have to see that the Gospel is about relationships and the impacting, redeeming power of our Lord. It is not about traditions or culture or a show. Christianity is cross-cultural and deeply impacting; it is more concerned with people than with customs. It is not about easy belief; rather, it is about the impact of our Lord going deeply within us, so He is displayed and deployed outside of us. Here is Jesus calling for us to cross our social and personal barriers to pursue people with a faith that is real, deep, and strong. Jesus transcended His and her culture to minister to a person who would not have been associated with or helped. In so doing, He cut across strict cultural barriers of race and gender, pointing us to the unity and impact of the Gospel. Our Lord engaged in conversation with a moral outcast and showed mercy to a public official, modeling for us the proper approach with which a man relates to a woman and to someone in authority: with gentleness and kindness and in respect. He practices what he calls us to: listening, valuing, caring, and conviction, all converging with the Gospel.

Jesus is directing us to look around and consider all the opportunities He has provided. What stops us? Is it our culture? Is it our fear? What about our past failures? Our expectations? Can we see what He has for us, the wonders of His grace and new life? Can we see His plan unfolding in front of us? Can we walk by faith, even when we are not sure where He is leading? Or, do we even see what is around us? Is the barrier so tall it blocks out the *Son*? Perhaps we are too busy running from what is ahead, taking the long road in a desert of despair and hopelessness. Our expectations must be in the reality and veracity of who Jesus Christ is, His perfection and activity, and what He came to do for us.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. When you were growing up, did you have a serious illness that concerned your parents?
2. Have you ever made a passionate plea of desperation? If it was answered, how did you feel? If it is not answered yet, do you keep complaining or do you trust and make your need known in respect and hope? How do you suppose that father felt?
3. How do you know that Jesus is the One of true help and that He is in your midst? What have you seen move a person from mere curiosity about Jesus to a faith in Him?
4. Why do you suppose the Galileans were welcoming? Why do some people just want a show of signs and wonders without the real Wonder that goes with it?
5. This was Jesus' hometown; why do you think it was too much for them to see Him as more than a Carpenter?
6. How is belief an essential precursor to faith? How is faith not just mere belief? What were the causes and motivations of that official to spread his new faith to his entire family? What about your motivations?
7. How do you think Jesus felt to see faith in this official but not his own people? What does Jesus think of one's power, position, or money? Why do none of these things really matter? Why are so many of us consumed with them?
8. How has Jesus lifted you out of the darkness and despair of your life to a new life filled with wonder and hope? How can you share this with someone else?
9. What do you think causes some Christians to stagnate into apathy, depression, or disillusionment? How can you guard yourself against this?
10. What do you do when the failure of power, position, and resources fail to solve a problem? What do you think "word of faith" really means?
11. What is Jesus seeking from you? Why is it that without a trusting belief, you have nothing that is real faith?
12. What do you need to do to make sure that your faith is fueled on gratitude? What needs to happen for you to move from motivated by an expectation to a real, effectual faith? How will your faith grow from being planted to growing and spreading more? What do you need to do? What is it going to take for you to do it? When will you do it? Do it now!

More on *Signs and Wonders* here

<http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=46736&columnid=3881>