

# *The Journey... Walk as Jesus Walked*

Part 15 – Believing Up Close and Healing From Afar!

John 4:46-54 – April 11, 2010

*Jesus is now fully immersed in his ministry. He had just come from Samaria and has been in public ministry for at least 18 months. He concludes phase 2 of His ministry with a remarkable miracle... the healing of the nobleman's son... and He does it without even being physically present!*

## I. Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> miracle: Healing from a distance!

### A. **The return:** (v. 46)

*<sup>46</sup>Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.*

1. *Royal Official (basilikos):* A father meets with Jesus in Cana concerning his son who lies sick in Capernaum some 14-20 miles away.... quite an effort! This royal official probably worked for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. He could be Chuza (Herod's steward) mentioned in Luke 8:3.
2. If this man was a Gentile, then this marks a progression from Jew (John 3) to Samaritan (John 4) to Gentile (John 5) in Jesus' ministry, in keeping with the pattern followed also in Acts 1:8.
3. The interaction between Jesus and the man occurs in Cana... the same place as His first miracle (wedding fiasco averted by water changed into wine!).
4. Note: This is not the same as the healing of the centurion's son in Matt. 8 and Luke 7. There are several differences.
  - The centurion's slave suffered from a paralysis; the royal official's son was ill with a fever.

- The centurion is in Capernaum; the royal official is in Cana.
- The centurion's faith wins Jesus' praise; the royal official and others are rebuked for a deficient faith.
- The centurion urges Jesus not to come, but only to speak the word; the royal official urges Jesus to come.
- The centurion has Jewish elders to plead his case; the royal official pleads with Jesus personally.

## B. **The request** (v. 47-49)

*<sup>47</sup>When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. <sup>48</sup>So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." <sup>49</sup>The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."*

### 1. **The plea** (v. 47)

- **Requesting:** This is a repeated, persistent imploring. The imperfect tense of the verb "begged" (*ērōta*). The request was not casual, but insistent. He begs Jesus to heal the boy. This is a last act of desperation of a loving father to a lowly carpenter.
- His belief is driven out of desperation for his son, not out of devotion to Jesus! His goal in coming to Jesus was not to obtain eternal salvation for himself, but physical healing for his dying child.
- **Illustration:** Your son has cancer and you want the best oncologist you know to see him, whether your insurance covers it or not!
- It is interesting to note that he had enough faith to believe that He could heal his son, but not raise him from the dead. He also mistakenly thought Jesus had to be in physical proximity for "it to work"!
- **Application:** Belief starts with acknowledgement. At least he recognized his need.

### 2. **The problem** (v. 48)

- Jesus is “bummed” by the fact that people demand He perform miracles before believing in Him. Jesus is more than a miracle worker, He is the Messiah
- *You*: plural indicating that He is rebuking not just the man, but the Galileans in general. The guy had asked around, found Jesus, a small crowd had gathered hoping to see a miracle and Jesus gives them a little “sermonette” instead!
- As this incident demonstrates, the reception of the Galileans, like that of most Judeans (2:23-25), was superficial, curious, thrill-seeking, non-saving, sign-based interest. MacArthur

### 3. The persistence (v. 49)

- The father continues to seek help from Jesus.
- My child: a tender-loving description, as opposed to my son.
- He even calls Jesus “Sir” which means lord. He shows great respect.

### C. The response (v. 50)

*<sup>50</sup>Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off.*

1. Jesus promises that the boy will live. Without any tangible proof that his son was healed, he took Jesus at His word **and started off** for home. He was forced to make the difficult choice between insisting on evidence and thus showing disbelief and of exercising faith without any tangible proof to encourage him.
2. *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).*
3. When the crowd hears Jesus say, “**Go home; your son will live,**” they probably say to themselves, “Yeah, right!” I think they believe that His words are only intended to get rid of this persistent father, not words of assurance that his

son really has been healed. We are not told that anyone accompanies the official to Capernaum, or that anyone other than his own household comes to trust in Jesus. The crowd disperses, and the sign-seekers go away disappointed, and perhaps a little angry.

4. Jesus doesn't want to make a scene and cause the crowd to start the Messiah chant. He is very clever. He "pushes" them away by not "performing", but doesn't scare off the royal official by offending him!
5. **Illustration:** A college professor "scaring" the students about how hard the class will be, so the less disciplined students will drop it!

#### D. **The results** (v. 51-54)

*<sup>51</sup>As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. <sup>52</sup>So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the <sup>1a</sup>seventh hour the fever left him." <sup>53</sup>So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household. <sup>54</sup>This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.*

##### 1. The physical restoration of the boy (v. 51–53a)

- As the man was making his way home, his own servant had been making their way to tell him that not only had his son not died, but that he was alive and well.
- From the servants' point of view, their master's son becomes very ill, and they watch helplessly as his temperature climbs dangerously high. They know that if something does not happen quickly, the boy will die. They watch, in desperation, as their master hastens to Cana of Galilee, hoping to find Jesus and to convince Him to come and heal the boy. The child's condition continues to deteriorate after their master leaves. They begin to lose all hope. They hate to think of how their master will respond when he returns home to find his son dead. Then, suddenly, the child's fever breaks, and

he begins to improve rapidly. They know the danger has passed and that he will live. They do not have any clue as to how it happened, but they do not wish their master to agonize any longer than necessary. And so some servants go out to meet their master and to give him the good news.

- *Inquired:* The word often connotes an element of curiosity or intrigue, coupled with a strong desire to know some piece of information of which the questioner is ignorant. Köstenberger, A. J. (2004). *John*. Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (171). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic.
- It was the time of his son's recovery that verified to **the father** that a miracle had taken place, because he **knew that** his son's healing had happened **at that very hour in which Jesus had said to him, "Your son lives."**
- The 7<sup>th</sup> hour is at 1 pm. It would have taken the man only five hours to get back home (it is all downhill), yet v. 52 ("*yesterday*") indicates that he remained in Cana an entire day. The boy had been cured at 1:00 in the afternoon, and the next day the father arrived home. This proves he had real faith in Christ's word, for he did not rush home to see what happened.

2. The spiritual redemption of the entire family (v.53b–54)

- By healing his son physically, the Great Physician moved to heal the father spiritually.
- The result: his whole family trusted Christ. "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17, NKJV).

**II.** What do we learn about belief from this passage?

A. There are 3 stages of belief seen in this passage.

1. **Stage 1:**

Belief that is predicated on a supernatural event. This is “I will believe if”! I will believe if, you do such and such. The crowds who wanted signs and wonders were in this category. (cf. v. 48)

When the apostle Thomas finally believed that Christ had risen from the dead, only because he placed his finger in his wounds, Jesus said, *“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).*

2. **Stage 2:**

The man believed “intellectually” that Jesus would do what He said He would. It is belief in an “idea”. It is belief in His words. We believe it is theoretically possible, and hope that it will happen. This is “I believe you can”, Jesus! (v. 50)

3. **Stage 3:**

The final belief stage is seen in v. 53, I believe and I give you my life. This is belief in spite of!” This is I surrender. I make you Lord. It changes everything about what I believe! Ultimately the Samaritan woman, the nobleman and the disciples had this kind of belief. This is the kind of belief that Jesus wants from us today!

B. What happens when you “believe”?

1. Become children of God (1:12; 12:36)
2. Obtain eternal life (3:15–16, 36; 6:40, 47)
3. Avoid judgment (3:18; 5:24)
4. Partake in the resurrection of life (11:25; cf. 5:29)
5. Possess the indwelling Holy Spirit (7:38–39)
6. Delivered from spiritual darkness (12:46)
7. Empowered for spiritual service (14:12)

### C. Why don't people believe?

1. **Lack of exposure or information**: They just haven't heard. Example: when John the Baptist told Andrew (John 1:35-37). They need to hear His words to be persuaded. Samaritan woman is an example.
2. **Perceived lack of evidence**: They have heard the claims of Christ, but want evidence or miracles that they are true. Nicodemus is in this category. John wrote this Gospel, including all the signs that He did, so that men might come to believe in Jesus as the Christ (20:31). The people of Nazareth do not believe, and thus they see very few miracles. *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).*
3. **Stubborn pride or hard hearts**: The religious leaders were in this category. The Pharisees exhibited this kind of self-righteous unbelief. They would need to change their heart attitudes, even though they conformed to some external standards.
4. **Theology vs. Morality**: When people are in rebellion against God, it is easier to change your theology instead of your morality. Backslidden Christians are miserable, because they know the truth!

### III. Life applications for today

#### A. Real belief is...

Jesus wants us to trust Him at His word, not as a result of a miraculous sign. This passage teaches us about what belief is and its progression. Remember: John is the gospel of belief. The verb "believe" is used over almost 100 times.

#### B. Hoops...

God doesn't need to jump through "our hoops". He does what He wants, when He wants and how He wants. He doesn't want to draw attention to Himself, so once again He does a "private"

miracle. If He had done the miracle back at the man's house, an even bigger crowd would have been clamoring for more!

### C. Adversity...

God allows "adversity" so that we have to trust Him. The desperation of the man is underscored by the devotion of God. People come to Christ when they have a need! Only when we are desperate, does God really have our hearts!

Max Lucado, in [Next Door Savior](#), writes:

Jesus lived the life we could not live, and took the punishment we could not take, to offer the hope we cannot resist. WHY?

Jesus was angry enough to purge the Temple, hungry enough to eat raw grain, distraught enough to weep in public, fun-loving enough to be called a drunkard, winsome enough to attract kids, weary enough to sleep in a storm-bounced boat, poor enough to sleep on dirt and borrow a coin for a sermon illustration, radical enough to get kicked out of town, responsible enough to care for his mother, tempted enough to know the smell of Satan, and fearful enough to sweat blood!

WHY? Why would heaven's finest Son endure earth's toughest pain? So you would know that *"he is able...to run to the cry of...those who are being tempted and tested and tried"* (Hebrews 2:18 AMP). *Whatever you are facing, he knows how you feel.*

### Table Talk:

1. Compare the faith of the crowd to that of the royal official. What was the difference?
2. How did the healing of the man's son affect him? His family?
3. Why did Jesus heal him from a distance?
4. In what ways does God call you to believe without having to see?
5. What kind of belief do you have?

## **Sneak Peek:**

Read Luke 4:16-31. This section marks the first time Jesus faces opposition from the religious leaders in the synagogue.

1. What did Jesus say that upset them so much?
2. In what ways do we “reject” Jesus today?

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