

The Word Heals

Maurice turned around from the full-length mirror when he heard the low whistle. It was his younger sister, Karen.

“Hey handsome, where are you going?”

“I have the graphic arts designer job interview today,” smiled Maurice, turning back to finger the knot of his tie.

“Really?” said Karen, easing down in the oversized chair in his bedroom.

Maurice had learned of the position at the local community college from a job app. Maurice had recently completed his bachelor’s in marketing and had done graphic arts work in the athletic department of his alma mater as a student intern. His initial response was feelings of inadequacy. Maurice received encouragement from friends and the Word of God. People wouldn’t know it to look at the 6’ 2” tall man, but he had long wrestled with feelings of shortcomings. It was an issue he had been praying about and working through.

While Maurice questioned it, he had hoped that he could be made whole in his emotions. It was one of his mentors, Winston, who had helped him grab hold of his reality in Christ Jesus.

“You are whole,” Winston had said. “It’s part of the work that Christ finished on the Cross. Whether you feel it or not, the Lord has made you whole in Him. All you have to do is to walk in it ... by faith.”

1. *In what life circumstances is it important to believe that good things will occur in the future even when you don’t see that immediately?*

2. *How easy or difficult is to believe in a God you can’t see?*

3. *How easy or difficult is it to trust God when you ask Him to answer your prayer or forgive you of your sins?*

LESSON FOCUS: Can you believe without seeing?

The Savior's Response to a Royal Official

John 4:46-50, KJV

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

John 4:46-50, NIV

⁴⁶Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

⁴⁸"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

⁴⁹The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

⁵⁰"Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

John 4:46 briefly mentions the episode recorded in 2:1-11, where Jesus miraculously changed water into wine at Cana in Galilee. Prior to Jesus returning to the town of Cana in Galilee, He spent several days in Samaria (John 4:1-42). Once He reentered Galilee, the residents welcomed Him. It did not take long for the news of His presence to reach Capernaum and an unnamed "nobleman" (KJV). He might have been a government administrator who served in the court of Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39 (Matt. 14:9; Mark 6:14, 22). It's

uncertain whether the official was a Jew or a Gentile and whether he was a soldier.

Nonetheless, it is clear that his young “son” (John 4:46) was bedridden with a life-threatening sickness in their home at Capernaum. The official, upon learning about Jesus’ presence, promptly went to Him and began repeatedly imploring Jesus to travel back to Capernaum and heal the father’s child, who was about to die (vs. 47).

Jesus responded that “you people” (vs. 48), all the residents in Galilee, demanded He do miracles for them, not just the official. Possibly, the official’s plea was similar to the demands other Galileans made on Jesus to perform “signs and wonders” (vs. 48). Sadly, Jesus perceived that, in general, the Galileans’ acceptance of Jesus was preconditioned on what spectacular deeds He carried out as a wonder-worker to improve their lot in life (see 2:23-25).

The administrator was neither put off nor deterred by Jesus’ blunt statement. Instead, he respectfully addressed Jesus as “Sir” (literally, “Lord,” 4:49). Then, in a genuine display of faith, the official once more pleaded with Jesus to travel to Capernaum before the boy succumbed to his illness. The underlying assumption is that Jesus needed to be in the child’s physical presence for him to be healed.

Perhaps after a momentary pause, Jesus told the official to leave at once. Then, before the distraught father had a chance to respond, Jesus declared that the young child would “live” (vs. 50, NIV). In turn, the official “believed” (KJV) the powerful declaration he heard and promptly returned with his entourage to his home in Capernaum.

4. *What situation did Jesus encounter upon His arrival in Cana?*

5. *How did the father respond when he learned about Jesus’ presence in Galilee?*

6. *What was Jesus’ initial response to the official’s request?*

7. *In what way did the official display persistence?*

The Royal Official's Belief in the Son

John 4:51-54, KJV

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.

John 4:51-54, NIV

⁵¹While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵²When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

⁵³Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

⁵⁴This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

"Going down" (vs. 51, KJV) reflects the fact that Capernaum was lower in elevation than the hilly plateau of Cana. Most likely, the approximately 20-mile trip would have taken longer than a day to make, traveling east through the hills of Galilee and then descending to the Sea of Galilee (which is nearly 700 feet below sea level).

Perhaps the official, having received Jesus' statement by faith, headed as quickly as possible with his subordinates to Capernaum. Yet, before the administrator could arrive at his home, some of his "servants" intercepted him and told the official that his son was going to live. The child's intense "fever" (vs. 52) had broken and he was now recovering. When the father asked when his little boy suddenly began to feel better, the servants reported that the "exact time" (vs. 53, NIV) was one o'clock in the "afternoon"

(literally, “at the seventh hour” from dawn) of the preceding day.

The servants’ response triggered the official’s memory—he quickly deduced that the moment when his child’s condition began to improve matched the time when Jesus asserted that the boy would “live.” There was not a second to waste as the administrator hurried back to his home in Capernaum to reunite with his son and the rest of his “household” (vs. 53).

Once everyone was assembled (perhaps in a spacious courtyard of the home), the relieved father would have told them about Jesus, the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth and the miraculous way in which the beloved little boy was healed with a word—not even a touch. All the members of the household (both family members and servants) were not only surprised and grateful, but they, like the official, then put their trust in the Messiah.

In verse 54, John noted that Jesus’ healing the official’s son was the “second sign” recorded in the fourth Gospel (with the first being the turning of water into wine; 2:11).

The miracle convincingly demonstrated Jesus’ supreme power as the Messiah. All those who put their faith in the Messiah became “God’s children” (John 1:12), as well as beloved members of His eternal, spiritual family.

8. *What impact did the news the official received have on him?*

9. *What resulted from the news about the miracle Jesus performed?*



A map of Galilee at the time of Jesus showing Cana and Capernaum.

God's Invitations

Everything seemed to change for the royal official when Jesus said, "Go, your son will live" (John 4:50). He stopped insisting that Jesus accompany him to his son's bedside. We can imagine the looks these two men exchanged before the official turned to go home with some certainty that what Jesus said was true.

Such exchanges can occur between God and ourselves in moments of praying, reading Scripture, listening to teaching, or even taking a walk. The words of Jesus come to us, and we go forward in certainty that we have been spoken to and these words are true. Like the royal official, we take Jesus at His word. These are God's invitations to us to trust Him more deeply, to nourish our relationship with Him.

In these moments, a further amount of trust in Jesus is then planted in us. Then when the assurance we read or heard or experienced from God comes to pass—although maybe not in exactly the manner we would have predicted it—even more trust develops. Our faith in God increases. A trusting relationship with God flourishes.

The apostle Peter wrote his first letter to new believers in what is now Turkey. They had not seen Jesus, but they had faith in Him, so Peter wrote to them, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:8-9).

10. *What are some of the promises of God, or assurances of Jesus, that people most often recall?*

11. *What helps you remember His promises—learning verses by heart? Putting phrases to music?*

12. *What life experiences have helped you trust in God even more?*

God's Willingness

God loves us and works with us in moving toward a life that is immersed in God's goodness and advancement of His kingdom here on Earth. God reaches out to us as friends and partners, which is evident from the promises offered to us. We respond with loving gratitude to a God who has given us so much.

► *Write a short note to God, expressing your desire to Him to move forward with Him in whatever He asks you to do, trusting Him no matter what.*

KEY VERSE

So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. —John 4:53, KJV

Then the father realized that his was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed. —John 4:53, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 11 through July 17

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** John 3:1-8—You Must Be Born from Above.
- Tue.** John 3:9-17—Jesus Brings Eternal Life.
- Wed.** 2 Samuel 22:2-7—My Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer.
- Thu.** Psalm 62—Salvation Comes from God.
- Fri.** Hebrews 2:1-9—Don't Neglect God's Message of Salvation.
- Sat.** John 12:27-36—Father, Glorify Your Name!
- Sun.** John 12:44-50—Jesus, the Light of the World.