



Week 8: Jesus Heals the Official's Son John 4:46-54

GOAL: To deepen our faith and trust in Jesus.

CHECKLIST

- Invest in your own spiritual life by participating in the daily Growth Guide readings. (This will also prepare you to lead the question about it in your group again this week.)
- Reach out individually to anyone who did not attend last week. Let them know that you missed them and would love to see them this week.
- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- If you haven't already, plan your Grow Group Pair-Up by connecting with the leaders of your paired group.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members (please include their names and contact info in the meeting notes section). Help new members register for your group using the QR code in your room or at vrbc.net/grow.

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I confess that sometimes I come to you thinking only of my immediate need and what you can do for me. Help me to remember the greatness of who you are and all that you have already done for me. Deepen my trust in you, so that I can follow you obediently with a confident faith. I pray the same for those in my Grow Group. I pray especially for anyone who is currently walking through a crisis — may they find confident faith in your promises. And for those who have experienced your faithfulness, may their stories inspire others to believe. Use this time to deepen our faith and make it contagious in our homes, workplaces, and communities. In Jesus' name, amen.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

CONNECT & COORDINATE

We will maintain the same rhythm each week this semester:

1. Welcome your group. Repeat introductions if there are any new people.
2. Coordinate any logistics (group socials, snacks, Grow Group Pair-Up, etc).
3. Check in with your group and gather prayer requests. Consider using the following questions:
 - Where did you see God at work this week?
 - Where do you need God in the week ahead?
4. Pray for the requests shared and for God to lead your time together today.

DISCUSS

- Can you think of a time when you or someone you know was in a crisis and turned to God for help? What did that experience do to your faith?

Read John 4:46-49.

- What do you notice about the father's approach to Jesus in this story? What does his request reveal about his understanding of Jesus at that moment?

Leader's Note: *This passage is the second of seven signs in John's Gospel, which are meant to reveal Jesus' identity and inspire faith (John 20:30-31). As pastor Caleb pointed out, this healing takes place in Cana, where Jesus performed His first sign of turning water into wine at a wedding (John 2:1-11). Both stories tell of faith evoked in response to what Jesus' word accomplishes.*

The man in this story is described as a royal official, likely a servant or family member of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee. Even as a man of status, he was still powerless to heal his own son. He calls Jesus "Sir" (Greek: kyrios, meaning "Lord" but also used as a polite title). He believes Jesus has healing power but assumes Jesus must be physically present to heal his son. His faith is sincere but limited.

This story is similar to the healing of the centurion's servant, told in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10. But the difference is that in those accounts, the centurion insists that Jesus does not need to come to his house, acknowledging that Jesus has the power simply to speak and what he says will be done. Jesus expresses admiration for the centurion's faith.

In John's account of the royal official, however, he initially insists that Jesus come in person. This shows that his faith is still developing. Jesus expresses no admiration of the man's faith, but he still moves forward with the miraculous sign.

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- The father came to Jesus in desperation because of a crisis. Why do you think God sometimes uses crises to draw us to him?

Leader's Note: *Psalm 50:15 says, "Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Many people first seek God when they are out of options. Crises expose our need for him.*

In his grace and mercy, God responds to our crisis faith. But he doesn't leave us there. He is constantly calling us to deeper faith and trust.

Jesus' response in John 4:48—"Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe"—is directed not just at the father but at a broader audience. It is a criticism of a faith that is based only on signs or miracles. Jesus knew that many people were more interested in his miracles than in his teaching, more interested in spectacle than in discipleship.

But despite their selfish or insincere motives, the story makes clear that it is God's will to intervene for good. Even when our faith is inadequate, God responds graciously and generously and calls us deeper.

- Have you ever prayed a "crisis prayer" like the father did? In what ways did God answer — or not answer — your request? How did it affect your faith?

Leader's Note: *Encourage personal stories, but remind the group that faith isn't dependent on getting the answer we expect.*

Read John 4:50.

- Imagine yourself in the father's shoes. What would you have done? What does it mean to take Jesus at his word in your own life today?

Leader's Notes: *Some in your group might admit a tendency to have argued with Jesus, insisting on their own way, or doubting Jesus' power to do something so extraordinary. Others may anticipate they would respond as the royal official / father did. Allow them to share either perspective without shame or guilt, keeping in mind that our goal is not to stay where we are but to recognize opportunities to grow in our faith.*

Encourage your group not to stay in the realm of "what if" but to move from there to personal application. If it's helpful, you can remind them of what Romans 4:20-21 says of Abraham: he was "fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

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- Where in your life right now is Jesus asking you to trust him without seeing immediate results? How does this story encourage you?

Leader's Note: *Faith grows when we trust God's word rather than relying on what we can see. Leon Morris points out that "Jesus' words impose a stiff test. He gives the man no sign. The officer has nothing but Jesus' bare word. But this is enough. He rises to the implied demand for faith. He believes what Jesus says and goes his way."*

D.A. Carson explains further: "The man's faith moved from merely believing in Jesus' power to believing in Jesus himself."

Read John 4:51-53a.

- When the father learned that his son was healed *at the exact moment* Jesus spoke, his faith deepened. Have you experienced a time when God answered a prayer or provided for you in a way that deepened your faith?

Leader's Note: *Previously, the father had known Jesus as a skilled wonder-worker, as did the crowds. But the "sign" pointed him beyond that, transforming his crisis faith into a greater faith.*

- Why do you think God sometimes confirms our faith through clear answers to prayer, but other times asks us to walk by faith without seeing?

Leader's Note: *Sometimes, God gives clear answers to build faith, like the official in John 4:53. Other times, God asks us to trust him even when we don't see answers, like Abraham in Genesis 12:1-4. Both experiences grow faith in different ways.*

Because God always knows what is best for us in the long run, God is more interested in growing our faith than in simply giving us what we ask for. Miracles alone cannot produce faith. For example, the Israelites in the Old Testament repeatedly saw miracles (Exodus, the wilderness, Joshua's victories), but many still lacked enduring faith. The apostle Thomas in John 20:29 needed to see Jesus' wounds, but Jesus told him: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." We are reminded of Hebrews 11:6, which says, "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."

James 1 reminds us that trials produce perseverance and spiritual maturity. If God always gave immediate, visible answers, our faith would be sight-based, not trust-based. God may delay answers to test and refine our trust, just as Abraham waited decades for Isaac (Genesis 21:1-5) and Joseph endured years of suffering before God's purpose became clear (Genesis 50:20). 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, "These [trials] have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold—may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

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- The father's confirmed faith was rooted in evidence of Jesus' power. How can we remind ourselves of God's faithfulness when we don't see immediate answers to prayer?

Leader's Note: *Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy once said, "Faith is not believing despite evidence; it is obeying despite consequences." What he's saying is that true faith involves action and obedience to God's word, even when we are faced with challenging situations or uncertain outcomes.*

So when the way forward is unclear or the desired outcome is not yet promised, we can heed the counsel of Psalm 77:11-12 – "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old." We remember that God has always been faithful, in our own lives and throughout history. And we can trust that God will continue to be faithful, and then act in trusting obedience.

Read John 4:53b.

- The father's faith impacted his entire family. Why do you think personal encounters with Jesus often lead to contagious faith? Can you think of someone in your life whose faith has inspired you or drawn you closer to Jesus?
- Who in your life might God be prompting you to share your faith story with right now? How can you do that this week in a natural and relational way?

Leader's Note: *The same thing happened in the story right before this one, about the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well. John 4:39 says, "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." May the same be true of us! May we be so confident and excited about what God has done and is doing in our lives that we can't help but tell others about it, and invite them to experience the same.*

- Which stage of faith do you most identify with right now: crisis faith, confident faith, confirmed faith, or contagious faith? Why?

Leader's Notes: *Pay attention to how your group members respond, as this will give us an opportunity to pray for one another as we close today. Additionally, I (Amy) encourage you to take note of those who may need a little encouragement in this area, and to reach out to them this week. You might share a verse from Scripture with them, let them know you are praying for them, or share a bit of your own story with them as a way to encourage them.*

PRAY

- Gather into small groups of 3 or 4 people. Take a moment to pray for one another — specifically asking Jesus to grow your faith to the next level. If anyone is in a crisis, pray for God's power to be made clear to them.

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