

Never Too Far Away

General Topic: The Agent of Creation

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Lesson Text: John 4:46-54

Background Scripture: John 4:46-54

John 4:46 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.

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.2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Lesson Objective(s):

This lesson will reveal the power of faith and belief in God even without a lack of visual confirmation.

Teaching Tools

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as www.kidssundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

Jesus Christ came to the earth to provide new life. During His ministry, He saw many examples of persons who claimed to share God's life but gave no outward evidence of it. Crowds mouthing pious phrases followed Him, but they wanted nothing except the spectacular

displays of His power. The religious leaders criticized Him and plotted to kill Him.

But there was always the few who demonstrated the reality of their faith. Our lesson this week involves one of those few, a nobleman whose son was sick. The nobleman believed Jesus even in the absence of evidence and saw his son healed and his family's life transformed.

Background

Cana of Galilee is the birthplace of miracles in Jesus' ministry. The healing of this nobleman's son is notable as Capernaum is approximately 16 miles away from Cana. This miracle is not only notable because of the geographic distance but because it marks Jesus' return to Galilee. Prior to Jesus' arrival in Cana, Jesus had taken a journey through Judea and Galilee.

Jesus was compelled to go to Samaria. Historically, the Samaritans were condemned by the Jewish people. Yet, Jesus needed to go to Samaria. Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1–6). Jesus' natural thirst was used to fulfill the spiritual thirst of the Samaritan woman, leading Jesus, and the Samaritan woman to have a life-altering, life-changing exchange. Jesus revealed His identity to the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman found saving, believing faith in Jesus. Her encounter with Jesus caused a revival in Samaria.

Jesus was recognized as the Messiah and was honored accordingly. Yet, Jesus' next journey was into Galilee. Jesus was received though not accepted or honored (John 4:43–45). In Galilee, belief was challenged, and miracles were hindered. The miracle healing of the nobleman's son was an announcement that Christ was in Cana, and He was indeed the Messiah.

The Challenge the Faith Creates (John 4:46-48)

The very existence of Jesus is a manifestation of the power of an unhindered and unrestrained spoken word. The nobleman was familiar with Jesus' miracles and believed in what Jesus could do. When the nobleman learned that Jesus was in Cana, he traveled for an entire day uphill to beckon Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son. The nobleman had the faith to approach Jesus knowing He could heal his son, but his faith was flawed because he believed the healing required His presence, believing Jesus' authority and power was relegated to His bodily form. Oftentimes, our faith can be flawed in desperation indicating the need for the flaws to be worked by our faith being challenged.

It is evident that the nobleman had believing faith, yet his faith was hindered by his thinking and experience. The nobleman believed the sickness of his son is what brought him to Jesus, but Jesus knew that the nobleman needed to be challenged in his faith to accept the reality of Him being Messiah and to demonstrate that His Word is as powerful as His presence when believed. The nobleman's faith in Jesus was sparked by what he heard, but his faith needed to mature so that it could be strengthened by his own experience with Jesus. The challenge of his son's illness brought him to Jesus so that his reality of Jesus could be challenged.

The Change that Faith Causes (John 4:49-51)

Often crisis reveals our expectation of God. Jesus' encounters on earth were designed to shift our perspective from the earth to heaven. The nobleman had an earthly expectation of what Jesus could do: heal. It could only happen if Jesus came in person. Jesus needed the nobleman to understand that the power of God is unhindered by time or space.

Everyone knows that distance from a source of power can decrease its potency. The nobleman fears that Cana's distance restricts Jesus' power. Even after Jesus issued the verbal rebuke, the nobleman still requests Jesus'

presence in Capernaum. He believed that Cana's distance would restrict Jesus' power. This is what happens with normal physical powers. Voices are harder to hear from afar, words are harder to read, so the nobleman does not realize that Jesus' word would be so powerful even from 15 miles away. Perhaps the nobleman had seen or heard about how patient Jesus could be with people and felt the need to hurry Jesus along to his house. It is possible that Jesus was already two days later than one would expect for someone journeying from Judea to Galilee, as the Samaritans had urged him to stay with them for two more days (John 4:40). For the nobleman's son, time was of the essence, and he repeated his request, "Sir, come down 'ere my child die." Thus, we find a man whose faith was not only limited by space, but also by time. Jesus later shows His mastery over sickness no matter the time when He waited to heal Lazarus until he had been dead for three days (John 11).

In spite of the nobleman's impatience, Jesus benevolently instructs the man to return home and find that his son is alive. It must have been something about the way Jesus spoke those words that led the nobleman to believe. Upon hearing one sentence, he stopped trying to re-route Jesus, and changed his own direction. To walk away from faulty and religious thinking, and to renew his mind with just a few words was a major step in the right direction. To leave Jesus' side was the utmost demonstration of faith. Jesus had rebuked him and the other Galileans about their reticence to believe without miracles. Now the nobleman trusts Jesus enough now to leave and start his 15-mile journey back toward his son even before seeing any proof of this miracle.

His faith was met with evidence when on his way home. His servants meet him and repeat Jesus' words almost exactly: "Thy son liveth." God's word never returns void. The nobleman's expectation needed dismantling because it limited the healing power of Jesus to Capernaum. Now that he has seen the fulfillment of Jesus' healing word, his earthly expectation has indeed been dismantled. There may be areas today where God is trying to shift your expectation. Christians can trust Jesus' word and leading completely, knowing that He is

able to do infinitely more than we could ever think or imagine!

The Champion that Faith Crowns (John 4:52-54)

The power embedded in the spoken word of Jesus shines out when the nobleman inquires at what time his son became well. The servants confirmed the exact timing of the word of healing that manifested for the son. The nobleman immediately recognizes the power in the healing word of Jesus, and the faith of the nobleman matured. The timing of healing words, "Thy son liveth" showed the nobleman the correlation between faith and miracles. He believed, his household believed, and his son lived.

It appears that John is taking readers on a journey, marked by the miracles and deep theology of Jesus. He emphasizes that this part of the journey is denoted by the second miracle. Commentators have used this verse to contrast the two miracles: the first miracle took place at a wedding—a joyous occasion and was done to bless a husband and wife; on the other hand, the second miracle demonstrated the complexity of life was related to a house of mourning and enacted on behalf of a father.

Jesus was drawn to the second miracle by intercession, the beginning of someone else's faith, but his mother drew him to His first miracle, the beginning of His own ministry. One reason for John's inclusion of this miracle was for the audience to understand the progression of faith from its weak and sensuous stage, to a tested and strengthened stage, to a final crowned and rewarded stage. One of the reasons Jesus came was to heal the sick. We limit His purpose in healing either because of flawed faith or flawed expectation. God promises that He will do exceedingly abundantly more than we can ask or think, through the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20). We must strive to mature in faith, dismantle our earthly expectations, and ensure our expectations are congruent with heaven. We must ensure that we are both believing and obedient to all of God's orders in our lives.

Additionally, there is a picture of salvation as we view a father advocating for the resurrection of his son. The difference is that while the noble man's son was only at the point of death, Jesus, the Son of God, fully experience death. In both situations Christ displayed His power over mortality, and He now sits at the right hand of His Father. When we properly display our faith in Him before the world, we crown him as the champion of our hearts bringing others closer to Him in the process.

Final Thoughts

In this week's lesson, we saw a nobleman from Capernaum demonstrate his faith in Jesus. Our faith is to be demonstrated and we express faith in Jesus by trusting Him for our needs and by sharing His message with others. We should be encouraged by the nobleman's show of faith and review our salvation experience and our lives as Christians with a view to discovering specific ways to demonstrate our faith in Jesus Christ to others.

Many of us have had desperate situations when we needed God to heal us or someone that we love. Often times we have responded desperately to those needs and were often left defeated because we did not receive the answer we had hoped for. The result of unanswered prayers pushes believers into a posture of begging, even though God does not require that or even want that from us. God desires our prayers to be fervent and persistent which results in mature faith. Mature faith is what gives glory to God.

Answered prayer also gives glory to God and serves as a testament to God's faithfulness to us. Not only does answered prayer witness God's faithfulness to us, but it also demonstrates to unbelievers the reality of God. God is trying to shift our expectation of Him. Earthly expectations of heavenly encounters would often weaken the demonstration of God's power in our lives.

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!