



## John 4:46-54

### Believing is Seeing

It is encouraging and enlightening to examine the lives of men and women in the life of Jesus and observe His method of dealing with them. Each situation and method of Jesus' ministry with them was different. However, there is also a pattern in how He worked in the everyday affairs of men to do the Father's will. God was at work in every one of these individuals' lives. Every encounter was a God-sized experience.

When God invites us to join Him in His work it is always too big for us to accomplish in our own strength. Our response will always reveal our true relationship with Him. We will either trust and obey by stepping out by faith and joining Him, or we will halt and not go any further in obedience to His leading. How tragic when we choose to do nothing.

What is our response when God shows us where He is at work? Do we argue with Him? Do we drag our feet? Do we make excuses and use diversion tactics?

When God shows us what He wants to do through our church, it will be something only God can do. We will not be able to stand back and take the credit for it. We can only bow with humble hearts and give praise to Him and say, I saw God do it!

#### **AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD REQUIRES FAITH IN HIM.**

#### ***A man of authority asked Jesus to heal his son (4:46-47).***

At the end of John chapter four we encounter a royal officer, probably a Jewish officer of the tetrarch Herod Agrippa, whose son was sick at the point of death. He lived at Capernaum about 20-25 miles away from Cana of Galilee where Jesus was ministering. Jesus spoke the words of healing in Cana and the boy was cured at Capernaum. This officer was accustomed to giving and receiving commands. He was accustomed to being in charge of government affairs and having things done. Someone said, when God speaks angels do not question or argue with Him. They go immediately and do it.

This royal officer heard that Jesus had returned to Galilee from Judea and went to meet Jesus. The man appears to be included in the crowd of miracle-seeking Jews. However, his need is urgent and he persists in his request to Jesus. He "was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death" (v. 47). The boy appears to have been chronically ill. This nobleman took off at once to find Jesus and when he found Him he commenced begging Him to come down at once and heal his son, because he

commenced begging Him to come down at once and heal his son, because he was close to death. This royal official repeatedly asked Jesus to come to his house. He went at once to Jesus and "began to beg and kept it up." He "kept on begging" (imperfect) Jesus to come to his home and heal his son (v. 47).

### *The man was facing a crisis situation*

His son "was at the point of death." The situation was out of the father's control. He did not have the resources to resolve the crisis. All human help had been exhausted. His son "was at the point of death." Verse 49 reminds us "Come . . . before my child dies." Only Jesus can save this child from imminent death.

### *The Response of Jesus (v. 48)*

The words of Jesus in response to the request are almost harsh. "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." It is a reflection of the attitude of the people who had to seek the evidence before they would believe Jesus. They were insincere and shallow. Seeing is not believing. Seeing is seeing. They wanted to see "signs" or miracles that point to God's glory before they would believe. A. T. Robertson says it pictures "the stubborn refusal of people to believe in Christ without miracles." These were "attesting signs" such as changing the water to wine showing that only God can do it. The "sign" always affects the divine purpose and shows God at work. Give us miraculous signs and then we will believe. The word "wonders" means something so strange as to cause it to be watched. It is something beyond explanation. They are miraculous in nature.

God does not work that way. He calls us to come and follow and then He gives the evidence later. Our pragmatic humanism dictates that we see the evidence and then we will respond. That is not faith. That is a reaction to the work of God. When He is going to do something, He commands that we believe, and this leads to a crisis of belief. He demands that we take Him at His word and obey. The evidence will come later. These people were lacking in a deep commitment to Christ and were only looking for sensationalism.

The government official whose son was sick unto death was not arguing with Jesus. He does not try to defend himself. Basically he was saying, "Whatever the attitude of my mind maybe, you are the only chance for my boy, please come down lest he die." Verse 47 tells us he "was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." Verse 49 tells us the father was persistent in his request. There is the imperative tone of urgency in his voice, "Sir, come down before my child dies." It was a crisis. It was out of control. He was desperate and He threw himself upon the mercy of Jesus.

The man thinks that Jesus' presence is necessary to perform the cure. However, Jesus gives the father only His bare words. Jesus spoke a word of authority and power. It was a healing word. That is all that was needed. It never occurred to the man that Jesus could heal his son at a distance. The power to heal lies in the

person of Jesus Christ. "Your son lives" —not a word or syllable more. The man rests his faith in Jesus alone. He has only the word of Jesus and he rests his faith on it.

Jesus saw the sincere faith of the father and said, "Go your way; your son lives" (v. 50). The word "to live" conveys both the idea of recovering from illness and return to life from the dead. In our context, it refers to the physical recovery from the chronic illness.

### *How do we respond when God speaks?*

What is our response when God shows us where He is at work? Do we argue with Him? Do we drag our feet? Do we make excuses and use diversion tactics like the woman at the well?

The royal officer saw himself as a man under command like a military officer. His attitude was not, "No one is going to tell me what to do?" He had an attitude of submission. He was a man under command.

The man said, "Come"; Jesus said, "Go." Without any hesitation the man went home. He obeyed the command of Jesus.

Do we really believe that the God who leads us where He is at work will also provide the resources to bring it to pass? I believe with all of my heart that when God calls a person to a ministry He also provides. I have watched Him do it over and over again to my utter amazement for fifty years. Often He provides even before we have time to ask. He leads us to seize an open door and the timing of His provision is always perfect.

When God tells us what He wants to do through us, we will face a time of spiritual testing. Can I trust God to do what He has said He will do in and through His disciples? How I walk by faith is a testimony of what I believe about God. Do I believe that He will accomplish what He has chosen to do through me? What is my response when Jesus says, "Come"? Do I follow all the way with Him?

God invites us to join Him in His work. He has an assignment for our church that only He can accomplish through us. When God invites us to come and join Him, we suddenly realize it is not something we can do on our own. If God does not do it through us, we will fail. This is the crisis point where many decide *not* to follow what they sense God is leading them to do. Then they wonder why they do not experience God's presence the way other believers do. Am I ready to trust and obey?

### *The obedient faith of the father (v. 50).*

The father obeyed the command of Jesus. Perhaps it was the note of command of authority in His voice that the man was accustomed to hearing. He connected with Jesus. "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off" (v. 50). It is instantaneous faith. "He started on his way." His faith was in action.

The man took Jesus at His word. There was no hesitation. He surrendered completely and immediately to the word of Jesus. Like the angels he does not argue or debate with God. He immediately did what Jesus told him to do.

## **THE MAN EXPERIENCED GOD WHEN HE OBEYED HIM (4:51-54)**

### *"As he was now going down . . . "*

The man walked away believing Jesus was true to His word (v. 50).

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The man did not receive a word of confirmation of the miracle of healing until later (v. 51). He did not wait until his son was healed before he believed Jesus. It was twenty-four hours later when we later see the man going down the road headed to his home in Capernaum. The father apparently delayed leaving for home until sunup the next morning, knowing his boy was out of danger. Use your sanctified imagination for a moment and catch the picture of the man on the road going toward his house and the slaves running up to him jumping, all excited and saying over and over again (imperfect) that his son "lives."

Distance had no bearing upon the question of the power of Christ to heal the man's son. Neither distance, nor time has any negative factor on what God does today.

### ***The confirmation of his faith (vv. 52-53).***

How did the man know Jesus did it? The timing was perfect. The boy did not begin to mend; he was healed immediately. The father was curious about the time when it happened. "So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better." The response of his slaves, "Yesterday at 7 PM (Roman time, 1 PM Jewish) the fever left him." It left him immediately when Jesus said to the man, "Your son lives!" Jesus healed the boy! It was no accident, or chance occurrence. His timing is always perfect. Perhaps the father thought the healing would be gradual when he asked what time he "began to improve." However, the servants reported a complete, instant recovery from a distance.

This is one of several miracles that Jesus performed "at a distance" (Matt. 8:5 13; 15:21 28).

"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" (v. 53). Believing is seeing! It is not the opposite. God said go; the man went and he experienced God at work in his life. The confirmation came after the man believed Jesus. It is the absolute use of the word "believe" as when a person believes on Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God. Here it is with the idea of becoming a Christian. We see the father's faith in Christ growing. God often uses our current need to drive us to find even more than we ever perceived. It was true with this man. He was driven to Jesus by his son's desperate need. His son needed immediate intervention, but the father found a greater need met that only Jesus could meet.

We miss out on the blessings of God because we wait and look for the evidence before we will believe. The royal official believed and experienced God at work in his life.

### ***The results of seeing God at work in a person's life (v. 53).***

"He himself believed, and his whole household." Here is the first reference to any whole household believing on Jesus. This man's faith was contagious. He led his family to faith in Christ.

Years ago Arturo Contag came to know Christ as his savior. This businessman wanted all of his employees to come to Christ. He formed a committee of pastors and mission leaders in Quito, Ecuador, made the preparation, paid all the expenses and invited evangelist Luis Palau to come to Quito and hold a crusade. He invited Palau to come to his fabric plants to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Acts 16 tells us about the Philippian jailer's family coming to faith in Christ.

## **PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THIS SIGN TO OUR LIVES**

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Have you gone through a crisis of belief lately? It is impossible to stay where you are and follow Jesus Christ. If you have not been challenged, even scolded by the Holy Spirit to get up and walk by faith, you are probably staying in your spiritual safety zone and not walking with Him. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Believing is seeing. Jesus was looking for faith that was independent of signs and miracles. Jesus was the focus of the man's faith.

***The critical question for us***

The question is not can God provide to meet my crisis situation. The question is not can we afford it? The question is not where we will find the money. The question is not left up to my finding the solution or the resources. The question is how big is my God? Did He call us to come and follow Him?

The critical question is where is God at work in my life? Where is God at work in your community? Where is God at work in your church? Do we have an intimate love relationship with Him and are we spiritually prepared to join Him where He is at work? Let's find out where God is at work and see if He will not invite us to come and join Him in what He is doing.

***God will provide***

God will provide because He is faithful to accomplish His will. He cannot fail. He has never failed to provide for His people when He invites them to come and join Him. He will open the doors. He reminds us that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills and He will sell the cattle off when the need arises. God is 100% faithful to what He is doing. He will always provide where He is at work. Maybe the real issue is, are we ready to trust Him fully? If we do not obey He will go over the railroad tracks and give the opportunity to those who will trust Him to provide.

***Questions to ponder this week:***

When was the last time God invited you, or your church, to come and join Him in a ministry that is beyond your ability to accomplish?

What was your response to the invitation? What was the response of your church?

Where is God at work in your life? Where is He at work in your town, village, or suburb? Where is He at work in your church?

When we walk by faith trusting in the Lord Jesus to lead and provide we will experience Him and we can honestly say with all of our heart I saw God do it!

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [\*\*A Free Gift for You.\*\*](#)

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