



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: John 4:43-54

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“After the 2 days [Jesus] departed from there [Samaria] to Galilee. **44** (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) **45** So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him because they had seen all the things he had done in Jerusalem at the feast (for they themselves had gone to the feast).

46 Now [Jesus] came again to Cana in Galilee where he had made the water wine. In Capernaum there was a certain royal official whose son was sick. **47** When he heard that Jesus had come back from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come down and heal his son, who was about to die. **48** So Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders you will never believe!” **49** “Sir,” the official said to him, “come down before my child dies.” **50** Jesus told him, “Go home; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and set off for home.

51 While he was on his way down, his slaves met him and told him that his son was going to live. **52** So he asked them the time when his condition began to improve, and they told him, “Yesterday at one o’clock in the afternoon the fever left him.” **53** Then the father realized that it was the very time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he himself believed along with his entire household. **54** Jesus did this as his 2nd miraculous sign when he returned from Judea to Galilee. (4:43-54)

SUMMARY:

Jesus’ healing the official’s son completes the series of signs beginning with changing water to wine. These two episodes form a matching pair of ‘Miracle-Quest’ stories.’ Both begin with a request, followed by Jesus’ rebuke, before he responds with a miracle—here a ‘remote healing’—which becomes a catalyst for faith in Jesus. Such miracles are ‘signs’ highlighting Jesus’ identity as more

than a miracle-worker, as God-incarnate. Not all Jesus' 'signs' resulted in such recognition and saving faith; Nicodemus takes Jesus merely as a miracle-worker; this official goes beyond that. Some depreciate 'signs-based belief,' linked with miracles, as "*suspect, preliminary, immature faith*," inferior to 'word-based faith,' founded on Jesus' teaching. But why is the official's faith (produced by Jesus' healing-miracle) inferior to the Samaritans' faith, resulting from Jesus' 2-day visit? *All* of Jesus' signs—including healings, miracles, etc.—are recorded so we "would believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and... have life in his name." Today the same Jesus still heals and helps in order to draw people into a saving relationship with him.

Questions

1. Jesus healed the official's dying son; that was a *miracle*, however in John 4:54 it's called a "*sign*."
 - a. What's the difference between a "*miracle*" and a "*sign*" in John's Gospel?
 - b. What is the author trying to convey by using the word "sign"?
2. In John 4:43-54 we can identify the elements of Request—Rebuke—Response—Result
 - a. What is the 'request'?
 - b. What is the "rebuke"?
 - c. What's Jesus' "response"?
 - d. What is (are) the "results(s)"?
3. In considering Jesus' "rebuke" (4:48)
 - a. What might the phrase "*signs and wonders*" signify in an OT context? [Search for this phrase on a Bible website; what shows up?]
 - b. The pronoun "you" in 4:48 is plural—"you people;" so is the rebuke aimed at the official, the 'crowd,' or both?
4. The verb "believed" occurs twice—in both 4:50 and also 4:53. What (if any) is the difference? How would you describe the official's faith in each case?
5. Several influential scholars distinguish between "*signs-based faith*" (engendered by *seeing* a sign/miracle) and "*word-based faith*" (resulting from *hearing* Jesus' teaching/preaching). Plus, some claim "*signs-based faith*" is inferior &/or inadequate compared to "*word-based faith*."
 - a. Do you agree or disagree with this claim (why/why not)?
 - b. Does John's Gospel support this distinction and this ranking?
6. Read the "purpose/theme statement"—John 20:30-31.
 - a. What are the various "signs" provided by John in this Gospel; do they include miracles, healings, works of power? What else is indicated by "signs" in this "purpose statement"?

b. Does this statement support or refute the claim “*signs-based faith*” is inferior to “*word-based faith*”?

7. Does God/Jesus still perform miracles (e.g. healings) today or was that only in the era of Jesus & the first apostles?