

November/December 2009

SMALL GROUP SERIES:

7 Signs of Jesus

Discussion Guide

Sign #2

Jesus Heals the Official's Son

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John 4:43-54

⁴³After the two days in Samaria, Jesus went off from there to Galilee. ⁴⁴Jesus himself gave evidence, after all, that a prophet isn't honored in his own country. ⁴⁵So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all the things he had done in Jerusalem at the festival, since they had been there too.

⁴⁶So he went once more to Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.

There was a royal official in Capernaum whose son was ill. ⁴⁷He heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, and he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, since he was at the point of death.

⁴⁸'Unless you see signs and miracles,' replied Jesus, 'you won't ever believe.'

⁴⁹'Sir,' replied the official, 'come down before my child dies!'

⁵⁰'Off you go!' said Jesus. 'Your son will live!'

The man believed the word which Jesus had spoken to him, and he set off. ⁵¹But while he was still on his way down to Capernaum, his servants met him with the news that his son was alive and well.

⁵²So he asked them what time he had begun to get better.

'Yesterday afternoon, about one o'clock,' they said. 'That's when the fever left him.'

⁵³So the father knew that it had happened at the very moment when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live!' He himself believed, and so did all his household.

⁵⁴This was now the second sign Jesus did, when he came out of Judea into Galilee.

James 2:18-24

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that people are justified by what they do and not by faith alone.

Facilitator's Guide

Helpful Background Information for the Passage:

John lays out the theme of his gospel in the first few paragraphs of Chapter 1: If you want to know who the true God is, look long and hard at Jesus... The one we know as Jesus is identical, it seems, with the Word who was there from the very start, the Word through whom all things were made, the one who contained and contains life and light. The Word challenged the darkness before creation and now challenges the darkness that is found, tragically, within creation itself. The Word is bringing into being the new creation, in which God says once more, 'Let there be light!'

Keep in mind that the seven signs were meant by John to build upon one another to spell out his major theme of the Word become flesh beginning a new creation in our world. To recap from last week:

The first sign, Jesus turning water into wine, points to the ultimate moment when heaven and earth meet and Jesus' glory is revealed fully to those who through faith see the glory hidden in the shame: the creative Word present as a weak, dying human being. The wedding points to the great heavenly feast. The water jars are a sign that God is bringing purification to Israel and the world in a whole new way. The social catastrophe of running out of wine is a glimpse of our own shame. The transformation of water to wine signifies the effect Jesus can have on our lives when we take Mary's words seriously: 'Do whatever he tells you.'

Between the first and second signs, Jesus has gone to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. This is when he knocks over the merchants' tables in the Temple and "several people came to trust in his name, because they had *seen the signs* he did." John 2:23. He takes an unusual route home choosing to go through Samaria rather than around it and rejoices over the Samaritans' reaction to him: "Many more believed because of what he said." John 4:41. Now he is returning home to the crowd that was with him in Jerusalem, the crowd that was dazzled by the "fireworks" they saw him perform during the Passover celebration.

Adapted from *John for Everyone* by N.T. Wright

Notes For Reflection:

Jesus Heals the Official's Son

START IT

- As a child, did you ever attend a magic show? Describe how you felt when the magician was performing.
- Do you believe that the miracles presented in the gospels were truly miracles that occurred in history or that they are stories or legends meant to illustrate spiritual truths? Does it matter?

STUDY IT

- Read through the passage and the facilitator guide as a group. As you are reading, make notes in the margins of any observations and/or questions that come immediately to mind. Refer back to those notes as you discuss the following questions.
- John 4: 44 & 45 seem to contradict one another – Jesus says the Galileans won't honor him as a prophet but then they welcome him. Discuss verse 48 as a possible clue to what is going on here.
- How is the official's attitude and response towards Jesus different than the general crowd that seems to be enthralled with him at this point? (Later in John's gospel, Jesus asks Thomas if he believed because he had seen and says that those who believe without seeing are blessed.)
- Why did Jesus perform miracles if he knew that people were going to follow him for the wrong reasons?

LIVE IT

- Name as many of God's promises to His followers as you can.
- Read James 2: 18-24. There is a big difference between believing in God and believing God. Describe a time when you altered your course of action because you were relying on God to deliver on one of His promises to you. What did you learn?
- Share one area of your life where you are feeling conflicted between trusting Jesus and going with your natural tendencies.

PRAY IT

- That God would help us to overcome our unbelief.
- As we live more and more out of our belief, that we would be sources of light in the darkness to our friends and family.